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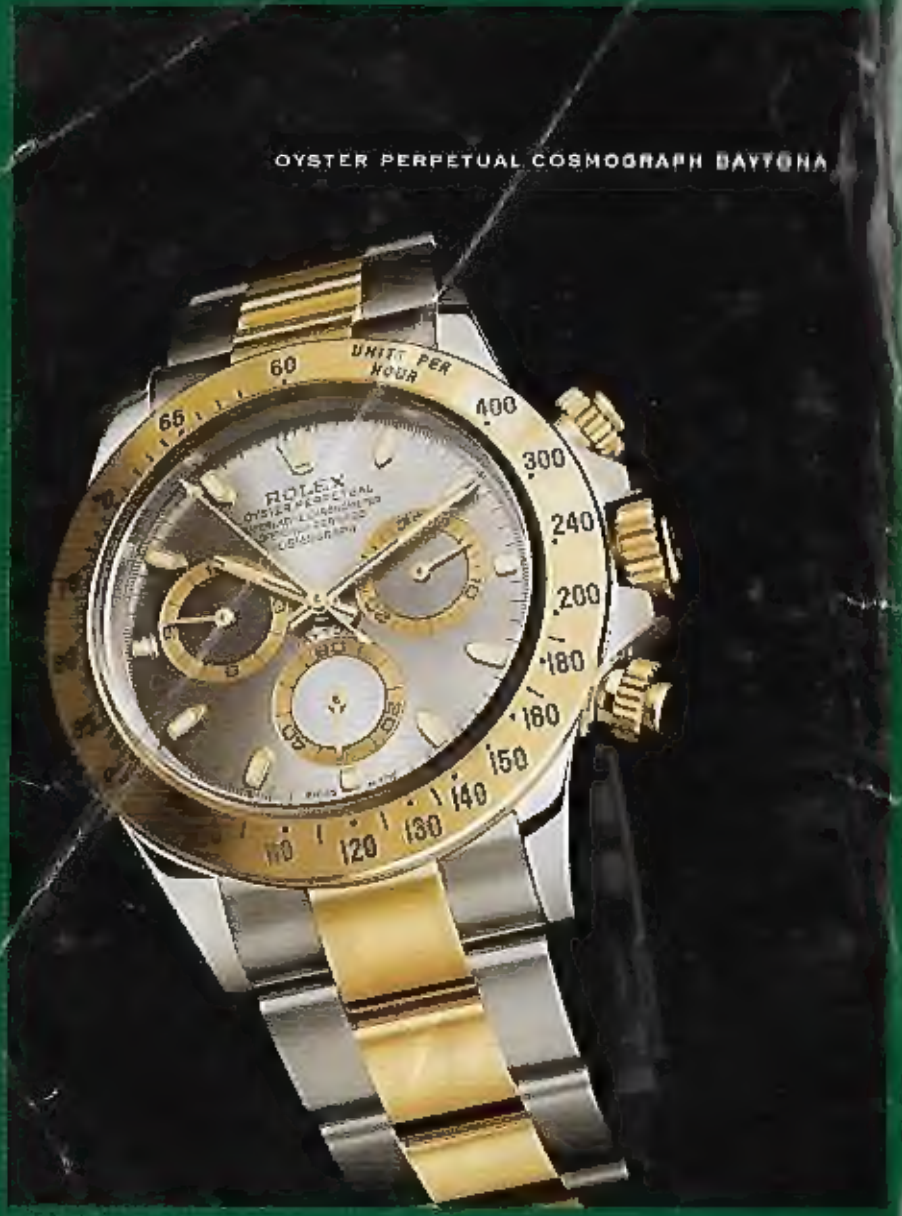

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Reader's Digest

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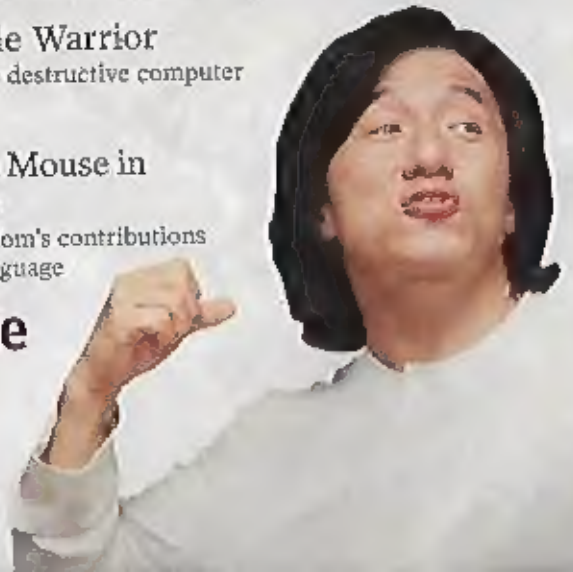

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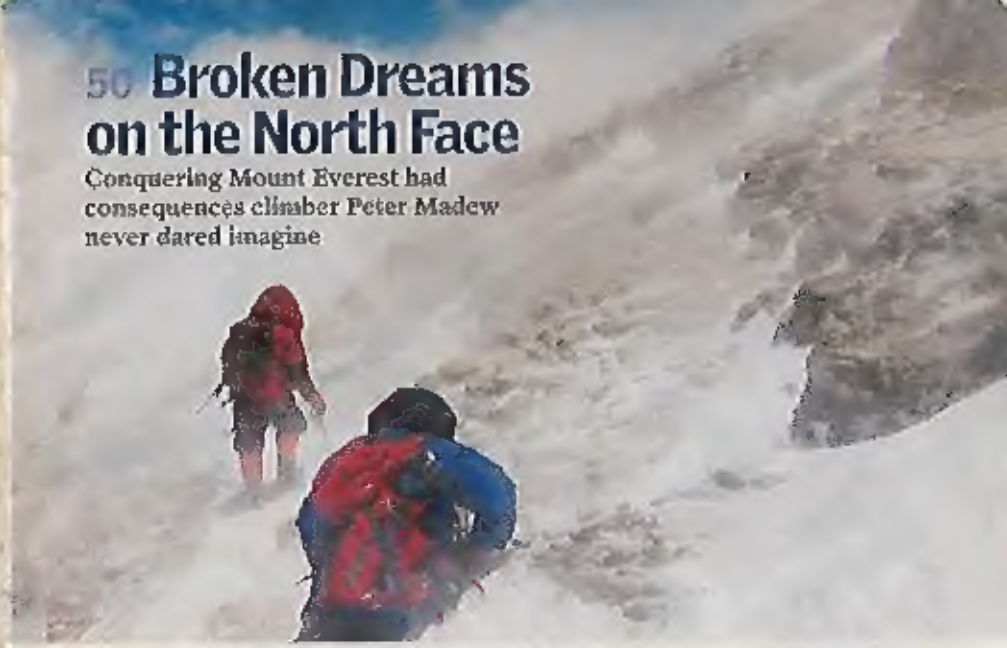

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PHOTO COURTESY OF LOGAN HARRIDO

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Little Emperors

IN PATRICIA DALTON'S CULTURE ("Parents: Don't Try So Hard," May 2004), it may be that parents are extraordinarily earnest in their "dedication to realising their ambitions for their children." But not in mine. My culture has been doing that since the days when Chinese parents were authoritative, marriages were arranged and three or four generations could easily live under one roof.

The real problem lies not in parents having too much concern for their child's happiness, but a lack of it, and then trying to compensate for this lack of time with material things. Children who are raised by absent parents but who have lots of possessions will not "inherit the earth" because they will not have been taught right from wrong. A parent's ultimate success is to love their children so they grow sound in body and in mind.

VERA LIANG-NG Hong Kong

PARENTS: Don't Try So Hard

Sacrificing everything to make sure your kids are happy is a big mistake

BY PATRICIA DALTON

ONE DAY I asked my mother why she worked so hard. She told me that she does not want her children to be unhappy. I am grateful to both my parents for working very hard, but I feel sad for them too. My younger brother, who is 15, gets a school allowance, but he asks for more to buy things for himself. My mother gives him this money just to make him happy. I think parents should learn to be

Ardy and Tingting Roberto

In the article "10 Diseases Doctors Miss" in our May 2004 issue, we reported on Tingting Roberto's struggle with lupus. Unfortunately, due to an editing error, several sentences created the impression that it was Tingting's husband, Ardy Roberto, who had the disease.

In fact, Ardy Roberto does not have lupus. We apologise to the Robertos for any distress this error may have caused.

strict with both themselves and their children. NURUL JULIET AIN, Singapore

WHEN my two daughters were growing up, we had a maid, but I gave the maid clear instructions that the girls had to dress themselves, clean up after themselves and get themselves to the school bus. My colleagues and relatives used to accuse me of being too harsh with the children and asked why I had a maid.

By asking my children to do their own chores, I wanted them to become self-sufficient and not handicapped by depending on others for the smallest things. I also wanted to show them that no work is unimportant and that everyone must work. We must treat children as children, nurturing them with love and care, but also discipline them to become useful, responsible and caring individuals. ALKA PRAKASH, Singapore

Warning Signs

IF ONLY I had read about aneurysms earlier ("10 Diseases Doctors Miss," May 2004), my dearest nephew Eldrich Alexander Setyo's sudden death might have been prevented. He died in April while working in Chicago. He complained of an excruciating headache, vomited, had a seizure, fell into a coma and never woke up.

Later, his company set up the Eldrich Foundation to help potential victims of aneurysms. Hopefully this foundation will help people who complain of suspect headaches to be able to afford the lifesaving but expensive diagnostic tests, such as magnetic resonance angiographs.

YENNY DJONIAT SETYO, Indonesia

YOUR ARTICLE was very informative, but the diseases it discussed are uncommon. Whenever a patient consults a physician with a symptom, the doctor must rule out the more common diseases before considering the uncommon ones. Frequently, it is actually a common disease that a patient has rather than diseases such as lupus or celiac sprue.

There is truth in the adage: "When you hear hooves, think horses not zebras."

FAY CATHERINE GLORIA, Philippines

Honestly!

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO honesty ("Honestly . . . What Would You Do?" April 2004)? Unkept promises, ridiculous exaggerations, scandals and the perception that everyone is just out to get something for themselves all multiply the evils in the world. Families are split and wars start because individuals and governments are not honest.

Psychologists say no-one can be labelled totally honest or dishonest, that honesty is a continuum into which all of us fall, some closer to the honest end and others closer to the dishonest end. But many people believe honesty can be learned. So how can one learn honesty? Strive to be open, reliable, sincere. It's often hard, but it is for the good of the world. BULBIR SINGH, Nevada

I WAS TROUBLED by the fact that your survey on honesty associated the use of "pirated" software with dishonesty. In reality, there is no moral basis for copyright or patent laws. These laws threaten people with violence and arrest for not behaving in a certain way.

We see "truth by repeated assertion" at work here. The claim that

So . . . How Honest Are We?

WE RECENTLY asked you, our readers, to go online and take our honesty poll ("Honestly . . . What Would You Do?" April 2004). The good news is that over 500 of you took the time to contemplate our questions (though not everyone answered all ten of them). The bad news is that for many of the questions you scored worse than the people we interviewed across Asia for our original story.

It may have been the anonymity of the Internet – or maybe Digest readers are just more honest when answering tough questions – but for half of the questions you showed a greater propensity for dishonesty.

Over **50 per cent** of Digest readers admitted they would steal office supplies for their personal use, a whopping 20 percentage points higher than in our original survey. And although **39 per cent** of you said you would look at a bank account statement carelessly left on a colleague's desk, that's still almost 20 percentage points more than in our face-to-face survey.

It could be a reflection of how tech-savvy our readers are, but **72 per cent** of online respondents admitted they would install illegal software on their personal computers, compared to 55 per cent in our cross-Asia survey.

Don't fret, readers are still overwhelmingly honest about returning the money if a supermarket cashier gave them too much change (**78 per cent** said they would) or when applying for a job (**60 per cent** wouldn't embellish their résumé) – though that still falls short of the 70 per cent in our original survey who said they wouldn't.

The good news is that **91 per cent** of readers would return a wallet they found to its owner.

We always knew you were honest!

initation is wrong has been repeated so many times, using terms such as theft and piracy, that it has seeped into the subconscious of many people. ARVIND KUMAR, India

No Laughing Matter

I DEPLORE jokes that ridicule religious ideas or beliefs (Laughter, the Best Medicine, February 2004). There are so many subjects that lend themselves to humour that I cannot understand why you have to turn to a religious subject for your jokes. And it is invariably Christian beliefs that are the subject of ridicule. I have yet to see jokes based on Muslim, Buddhist or Hindu beliefs in your magazine.

Before responding that Christians who object to religious jokes are narrow-minded, try publishing a joke about the Prophet Mohammad and see whether you can get away with it. DESMOND PEREIRA, Hong Kong

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Jackie Chan. Read even more of our interview with Asia's high-kicking action star.

Share a moment of your life in our feature "My Story." We're looking for entertaining, true stories from you, our readers. Visit **rdasia.com** for more details.

Have your say. Click on "You Said It" for tips on writing a letter that will get published.

Saving Paradise. Find out more about Asia's beautiful birds of paradise. Also read about the success the Philippine Eagle Foundation is having in releasing captive-bred eagles into the wild.

It's Never Too Late to Get Fit. Log on to **rdasia.com** and take our quick and easy test to find out how fit you really are.

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Into the Jungle

My friends warned me about the horrors of teaching in the remote province. I couldn't wait to go | BY KEVIN CHUA CHYE KIONG

I WAS BROWSING through my photo albums recently when I came across some pictures of my first assignment as a teacher. In 1990, after I finished my training, I signed up to teach in Sarawak, in the Malaysian part of the island Borneo. Just mentioning the name of Sarawak was enough to send shivers down any teacher's spine. I had heard so many horror stories about the schools in the state's interior – tales of head-hunters and black magic. Every teacher wanted to avoid working anywhere outside Kuching, Sarawak's capital.

Being a single 23-year-old, I decided to go ahead without whining. *What the heck, I could well learn*

something, I thought. Friends and relatives, who still regarded me as a timid teen, were amazed. "How could you survive in a harsh environment?" they wondered. But I was determined.

I flew out of Malacca, my hometown, with a large group of teachers all headed for assignments in Sarawak. As the Airbus approached Kuching International Airport, I could see only dense forest out my window. Where were the buildings? Could my school be located somewhere among those trees?

Our plane finally landed on the wet tarmac. As we walked to the terminal, a slight drizzle filled me with a feeling of gloom.

Officers from the state Education Department took us to a briefing, where we were given details about our postings. After a tense wait, I finally got my assignment: SRK Nyelitak in Simunjan.

One of the officers showed me the location of the town on a map. It was near Kuching, within driving distance. *Not that bad*, I thought. Some of the other teachers had to take a flight to a smaller town, and then continue their journey by boat. Others were told that they would have to finish the journey to their destination on foot.

I climbed into a van with six other teachers also headed for Simunjan. It turned out to be a very small town. Just a few rows of rundown shophouses – that was it. We bunked down for the night in a small room at the back of the district education office. I asked one of the local officers about my school.

"Oh, very bad," he replied. "I was teaching there for a while."

I learned that the school relied on a generator for its electricity and had no proper water supply. Getting there required a four-wheel-drive journey, then a walk through the jungle.

The following morning, I was driven for almost an hour in an old Jeep over gravel roads and uneven terrain. Finally we arrived in Kampung Giam, the nearest village to my school.

I ate what the villagers ate – squirrels, pythons, **ferns, mushrooms**

After greeting the village headman, it was time to get moving – I had to get to the school before dark. Some villagers helped carry my luggage, and we started walking. I felt very uncomfortable and odd walking through the jungle in my long-sleeved shirt, dark pants and black leather shoes.

As we made our way along a path through the trees, I talked to the villagers in Malay. Whenever I asked how much farther we had to go, I always got the same reply: *"Tak jauh lagi."* ("Not much farther.") After 45 minutes, we entered a clearing with two old wooden structures on stilts. One building held the classrooms; the other was the teachers' quarters. With only four classrooms and 45 students, it was a very small school indeed.

The students saw me from a distance and yelled excitedly in Iban, the language spoken by most people in Sarawak: *"Cikgu baru datai!"* ("New teacher is here!") After going without a teacher for a few months, they were clearly happy about my arrival. What's more, they rarely saw a teacher from Peninsular Malaysia.

A fair-looking gentleman in his 40s came out of his quarters. He smiled, extended his hand in welcome and introduced himself as the school's headmaster. He showed me my room, which was located next to his. It was a very basic place to live – just a bed frame and a long table. No sofa, no dining table, no TV.

A few of the students, who were either in slippers or bare feet, swept the dusty wooden floor. Villagers from Giam came to see the new teacher, and one of them offered me a woven mat to sleep on until I could get a proper mattress for my bed.

Since I had no cooking utensils or rations, the headmaster cooked for me that night. We had rice, edible ferns and fried eggs for dinner. As dusk turned to night, a kerosene lamp was lit. We sat and enjoyed our first meal together as colleagues.

KEVIN CHUA CHYE KIONG still lives in Malacca and is an English lecturer at the Institut Putra Maleka.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF KEVIN CHUA CHYE KIONG

Kampung Giam was the closest village to Kevin Chua Chye Kiong's school

chatting until bedtime. The night was peaceful – only the sound of crickets could be heard.

IN ALL I spent three years as a teacher at SRK Nyelitak. During that time, I learned to live a simple life. I ate what the villagers ate – squirrels, pythons, ferns, wild mushrooms. I learned to cook and wash my clothes. And I learned to be humble because I had to get assistance from strangers who knew far more about life in the jungle than I did.

I had to be brave enough to bathe outside, in only my underwear, exposing myself to the eyes of elderly villagers who passed by on their way back from their farms. To them, it was a normal scene. They smiled and teased me a little.

I returned to Malacca in 1993, tougher than I was before I left. I have never regretted making the decision to teach in Sarawak. And I feel sorry for those who were given the same opportunity but chose to stay put in the comfort of their hometowns.

A teacher is not a teacher until he had served some time in the interior of Sarawak.

My Story is a regular feature about moving, challenging or amusing personal experiences above and beyond the call of daily life. If you'd like to contribute a story, send your submission to the address on page 1 or by e-mail to asia.rd@readersdigest.com. Alternatively, log on to rdasia.com *and click on the My Story link. We will pay $500 if we publish your story.*

FUTURE SHOCK

Nostradamus recently turned 500. We honour the famous prognosticator by listing predictions from lesser lights.

Law will be simplified [over the next century]. Lawyers will have diminished, and their fees will have been vastly curtailed.

Journalist JONAS HENRI BROWNE, 1893

By 1960, work will be limited to three hours a day.

JOHN LANGDON-DAVIES, *A Short History of the Future*, 1936

Hurrah, boys, we've caught them napping. We'll finish them up and go home to our station. GEORGE A. CUSTER, 1876, prior to the Battle of Little Big Horn

Telephones [will] bring peace on earth, eliminate Southern accents . . . and save the farm by making farmers less lonely.

Century-old pronouncements printed in *Wall Street Journal*, 1995

WORD POWER

THIS MONTH we're off to sea, where 3.5 billion years ago life began in the primeval oceans. Please dive right in. The Cousteau Society website (cousteau.org) helped us create this quiz by, um, deepening our ocean knowledge. Answers are on the next page.

1. **atoll** *n.* – A: coral reef encircling a lagoon. B: steep cliff. C: sound of a ship's bell. D: fishing net.
2. **tack** *v.* – A: to harvest. B: alter direction. C: drift. D: lose speed.
3. **corolla** *n.* – A: reddish coral. B: undersea cave. C: tidal wave. D: flower petals.
4. **littoral** *adj.* – relating to A: a fish's diet. B: breathing apparatus. C: ship cargo. D: the seashore.
5. **gestate** *v.* – A: to grow. B: carry during pregnancy. C: approach. D: swim in formation.
6. **estuary** *n.* – A: where ocean meets river. B: ocean bed. C: deep-sea predator. D: lighthouse.
7. **floe** *n.* – A: unit of tidal measure. B: type of whale. C: floating ice sheet. D: air-tank mouthpiece.
8. **pelagic** *adj.* – relating to A: ancient sea creatures. B: big waves. C: the open sea. D: seaweed.
9. **scuttle** *v.* – A: to float. B: sink. C: cut precisely. D: dive.
10. **frond** *n.* – A: microscopic ocean plant. B: large tidal pool. C: endangered shellfish. D: large leaf.
11. **halyard** *n.* – A: rope that raises sail. B: ship's kitchen. C: anchor chain. D: veteran sailor.
12. **mutate** *v.* – A: to relocate. B: turn suddenly. C: change. D: eat indiscriminately.
13. **piscatory** *adj.* – relating to A: plant life. B: fish or fishing. C: scuba gear. D: beach sand.
14. **regenerate** *v.* – A: to add new traits. B: use twice. C: produce anew. D: eat one's own young.
15. **osmosis** *n.* – A: prehistoric fish. B: how coral reproduces. C: steady loss of appetite. D: movement of water molecules.
16. **kelp** *n.* – A: tiniest shark. B: knot used by sailors. C: dolphin sound. D: type of seaweed.

Water, water all around and not a drop to drink. On this page, water is good for one thing: using its letters to make other words – *art*, for instance. We know of 20 more. Can you name them? Answers on the next page.

ILLUSTRATED BY CHRISTOPHER NITZ

ANSWERS:

1. **atoll** – *[A]* Coral island consisting of a reef surrounding a lagoon. Who wouldn't love to throw it all in and escape to an *atoll* in the Pacific?
2. **tack** – *[B]* Alter direction when sailing. If you see clouds on the horizon, it's time to *tack* toward shore – in a hurry.
3. **corolla** – *[D]* Flower petals; inner whorl of floral leaves. The *corolla* of each sea-grass flower was visible from the surface through the crystal-clear water.
4. **littoral** – *[D]* Relating to – or growing on or near – a shore, especially of the sea. What kind of strategies can we come up with to stop the further erosion of our *littoral* habitats?
5. **gestate** – *[B]* Carry in the uterus during pregnancy. Whales *gestate* for up to two years before giving birth.
6. **estuary** – *[A]* A water passage where the tide meets a river current. A Pacific salmon must pass through a coastal *estuary* before making its way upriver to spawn.
7. **floe** – *[C]* Floating ice formed in a large sheet on the surface of a body of water. During harsh winters, the ice *floes* drifting on northern rivers can be immense.
8. **pelagic** – *[C]* Of, relating to, or living or occurring in the open sea. The pelican is among the best-known *pelagic* birds.
9. **scuttle** – *[B]* Sink or wreck, especially by making holes. They decided to *scuttle* the old ship to create an artificial reef.
10. **frond** – *[D]* Large leaf, usually on a palm or fern. On days when the heat gets unbearable, I like to fan myself with a palm *frond*.
11. **halyard** – *[A]* Rope used to hoist a sail. The captain ordered me to pull hard on the *halyard* as we prepared to leave the harbour for the open sea.
12. **mutate** – *[C]* Change. Pollution can cause harmless plants to *mutate* into toxic killers.
13. **piscatory** – *[B]* Relating to fish or fishing. That fish-head soup Frank whipped up last night was a *piscatory* delight.
14. **regenerate** – *[C]* Produce anew. Some experts believe our ocean fishing stocks are becoming too depleted to *regenerate*.
15. **osmosis** – *[D]* Movement of water molecules, via a membrane, from an area of low-salt concentration to one of high-salt concentration. While it may sound like a harmless process, *osmosis* can actually kill a freshwater fish placed in salt water.
16. **kelp** – *[D]* Large brown seaweed found in cold waters. I'm used to having *kelp* tangled around my legs when I'm swimming, but also like having it served to me in a Japanese salad.

VOCABULARY RATINGS
10-12 Good **13-14** Excellent **15-16** Exceptional

Answers: Here's our list of words created by rearranging the letters that spell *water*: are; art; ate; awe; ear; eat; era; rat; rate; raw; ret; tar; tare; taw; tea; tear; war; were; wart; wear; wet.

Come, Let Us Imagine Together

Your picture could be the car of tomorrow

WIN A TRIP TO EXPO 2005 AICHI, JAPAN

At Toyota we dream of creating new and better cars.
We'd really appreciate your help.
Please send us a picture of how you imagine the car of the future.*
You could win a trip to Japan to visit EXPO 2005 AICHI, JAPAN. And who knows, one day you might get to see your dream driven on roads all over the world.
What could be better than that?

*This contest is limited to children of the age of 15 or under. Details on the following pages.

THEMES

DIVISION 1
Your dream environment-friendly car

DIVISION 2
Your dream human-friendly safe car

DIVISION 3
Your dream car based on your creative imagination

TOYOTA

TOYOTA Dream Car Art Contest

PRIZES

FIRST PRIZE
6-day, 5-night trip* to Japan for two
Highlights will include EXPO 2005 AICHI JAPAN and a day at Universal Studios Japan™ (One winner)

TOYOTA IS OFFICIAL MARKETING PARTNER OF [illegible] JAPAN™
[illegible] All rights reserved

SECOND PRIZE
4-day, 3-night trip* to Japan for two
Highlights will include EXPO 2005 AICHI, JAPAN.
(9 winners, 3 per division)

*Those trips include air tickets and accommodation. The award of these trips are subject to the terms and conditions specified in the application rules.

THIRD PRIZE
[illegible] made water color painting set
(30 winners, 10 per division)

HONORABLE MENTION
Mo'mo and Kiccoro - EXPO 2005 mascots - stuffed toys (60 winners, 20 per division)

A World Where Dreams of the Future Blossom
The 2005 World Exposition, Aichi, Japan"

People from all over the world will gather for EXPO 2005 AICHI, JAPAN. Nations from all around the globe will also their pavilions to showcase their unique dreams of a world in Nature's Wisdom. TOYOTA GROUP PAVILION will be dedicated to the theme "The Dream, Joy and Inspiration of Mobility in the 21st Century." Our exhibits will focus on "Mobility in Harmony with the Planet" and "The Appeal of Mobility." The dream and joy of worldwide movement-" proposing new directions for a brighter and more prosperous future society.

EXPO 2005 AICHI JAPAN

TITLE: The 2005 World Exposition, Aichi, Japan
DURATION: 25 March to 25 September 2005
LOCATION: Nagakute Town, Toyota City and Seto City

Toyota Technology, Giving Shape to Our Dreams
More Eco-friendly. More Fun.

WORLD-CLASS ECO-FRIENDLY TECHNOLOGY
Our theme is "ECO&POWER." Innovative hybrid technology that combines petrol engine and electric motor. This technology sharply reduces emissions and dramatically improves fuel efficiency - makes the Toyota Prius an Eco-friendly car with outstanding automotive performance.

PRIUS

PIONEERING SAFETY TECHNOLOGY
Toyota's Pre-crash Safety System is cutting edge safety technology. It helps detect impending collisions by millimeter wave radar, take up the slack in seat belts before impact and reduce impact speed by the brake assist system and so minimize passenger injury.

DREAM-PACKED FUTURE TECHNOLOGY
Toyota is also developing a rich array of other advanced technology. Join us at EXPO 2005 AICHI, JAPAN where displays at the TOYOTA GROUP PAVILION will include the futuristic concept vehicle "i-unit" and a show performed by robots introducing new technologies and the new potentials they offer for tomorrow's cars.

i-unit design image

Application Rules

The following new application rules supersede the May 2004 Application Rules. Any entry under the May Application Rules shall be deemed to be new application rules unless otherwise specifically agreed by the applicants and the parent or legal guardian.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS
- [illegible] where [illegible]
- Each entry must be the original work of a child of the age of [illegible]
- [illegible]
- [illegible] in any other contest and work that infringe all rights may not be submitted. To be eligible [illegible] be residing in the home of the guardian they are [illegible]
- [illegible] of legal guardian will be [illegible]
- [illegible] be [illegible]
- [illegible] will [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

Malaysia may not be a large country. But it can offer the sun worshipper a bewildering array of beaches to choose from.

Along the shoreline of the east coast of Peninsular Malaysia which is one of the longest in the region, you'll find powdery stretches of golden sand. In other parts, the mystical black sand beaches are truly one of a-kind. There are even beaches with millions of smooth pebbles that pepper the shores. And these are just some of the offerings you'll find on the country's mainland.

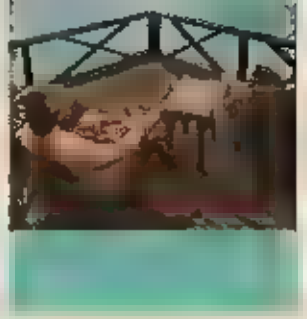
The variety easily becomes quite dizzying when you add to the list the beaches of over a hundred islands as well. Islands like the legendary Langkawi which is steeped in ancient folklore. Or the famous Pulau Redang and Pulau Perhentian which are off the peninsular's east coast and Pulau Sipadan in Sabah. These islands attract thousands of scuba divers each year. Pulau Sipadan, in particular, has been rated as one of the top five dive sites in the world.

Next, the fun comes with choosing where to stay. If you have the time, you can take your pick from an assortment of quaint beachside chalets that are very affordable. Or you can indulge in the luxury of world-class resorts like the Datai and Andaman in Langkawi or the Pangkor Laut Resort which played host to celebrities like Bayard

But no matter what you choose, you'll surely notice one consistent thing wherever you go. And that's the friendliness of the people.

And even with such variety and abundance, Malaysia's beaches and islands are unlike anywhere else in the world. The breathtaking beaches here are nestled against a lush 130-million-year-old rainforest. Even the colours of golden sand and emerald waters are quite unique to these parts.

It's something you just have to experience for yourself. Those who have call this place paradise on earth. For now, you just need to call your travel agent.



Tourism Malaysia

TOURISM MALAYSIA

www.tourismmalaysia.gov.my

Lose Weight, Stop Smoking

OBESITY is on its way to surpassing smoking as the number one preventable killer in many countries. Now there's a drug that could address both problems, say researchers at Laval University in Canada. In a trial of 1036 overweight and obese patients, 73 per cent of those who took 20 mg of rimonabant, which acts on the brain's pleasure centre, lost over five per cent of their weight after a year; nearly half lost more than 10 per cent.

And in a second study of 787 smokers with an average habit of 23 cigarettes a day, 28 per cent quit smoking when using rimonabant, just 16 per cent of those on a placebo did. Plus, they did it while gaining little or no weight.

Rimonabant blocks brain receptors in the endocannabinoid system; the drug seems to reduce the stimulation we get from food or nicotine.

Smoking and obesity lead to heart disease and cancer, so the drug, which could be available by late 2005, has the potential to lower the incidence of both.

Iron Out Fatigue

Anaemia can stem from a vitamin B-12 deficiency, cancer treatment, even faulty genes, and making a diagnosis is fairly straightforward. But tests for anaemia caused by iron-poor blood may be missing a lot of fatigued women. Researchers at Cornell University gave 41 young women who had low iron stores – but not anaemia – a placebo or iron pills and an exercise prescription. After six weeks, those with the greatest iron deficiency improved their fitness level only when they took iron supplements.

Since iron supplements can cause serious problems in some people, ask your doctor before swallowing any. A safe way to increase your iron intake is to eat more iron-rich foods, like red meat, legumes and iron-fortified cereals.

Migraine, Begone

GET HIT with searing head pain, take a painkiller, wait for the hurt to go away – that's the routine for most migraine sufferers. But the pills most commonly used can lead to "rebound" headaches. A new study suggests that an antiseizure drug can reduce the frequency of – and in some cases, prevent – migraines without that nasty rebound.

In a trial that took place at numerous medical centres across the United States and Canada, a total of 468 patients took the drug, called topiramate, or a placebo for six and a half months. Those getting 200 mg of topiramate a day experienced roughly half as many monthly migraines as usual, on average. People who took a lower dose went from five to four migraines per month.

Migraines are caused by hyperactive brain signals overwhelming nerve endings; topiramate seems to calm the signals. Researchers believe topiramate can stabilise brain activity so migraines don't return, meaning patients might not have to take the medicine indefinitely, says Jan Brandes, a neurologist at the Nashville Neuroscience Group. The US Food and Drug Administration is expected to approve the use of the drug before year's end.

People who use antibacterial soaps are just as likely to get sick as those who use regular soap

SOURCE: Annals of Internal Medicine

DOWNSIZING YOUR HEALTH

Yes, losing a job is stressful, but it turns out that retaining your position in the wake of company layoffs is no picnic either. Scientists at the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health examined 22,430 employees during a recession and found that people who kept working were more likely to take sick days and were twice as likely to die from heart disease compared to employees whose company didn't downsize.

Study author Jussi Vahtera, an occupational health specialist, believes overwork is the culprit – there's more work for fewer people, not to mention the ever-present worry of more job cuts. If you're dealing with job cuts, don't forget to make time for stress-reducing exercise, family and yourself.

Is it more economical to leave the lights on or shut them off when we leave a room?

OUR PARENTS told us to turn the lights off each time we left a room, and it turns out they were right. It not only saves on electrical use but is also safer.

Sometimes we think that frequently having to turn the lights on and off wastes energy. But only older fluorescent lights need an initial burst of energy to light up, and that is so small that having the lights turned off compensates for this burst in a matter of seconds.

How did the term "Mayday" become a distress call?

"MAYDAY, mayday, mayday!" the distress signal that alerts listeners that a vessel or aircraft is in grave danger and requires immediate assistance, is thought to be a corruption of the French venez m'aider (come help me).

The term was decided upon as a distress signal at the International Radiotelegraph Conference in Washington in 1927. Almost 300 delegates from 79 countries were present at the conference.

How far back in time can the average person remember?

HUMANS can remember as far back as the age of two or three. "We won't remember much," says Jean-Roch Laurence, a researcher at Concordia University in Montreal, "but we will remember something." He cautions, however, that our memories are often part of our family history that has been frequently retold by others. So, our memories are often partly their recollections.

When we retrieve a memory, our brain goes back to the last time we thought or talked about it. In other words, it's the latest recorded version that we remember. We also tend to script our memories by adding, each time we remember, new features and deleting others.

We need your questions. Write to "Facts of Life" at the address on page 1 or send an e-mail to asiard@readersdigest.com.

Despite his disabilities, Hsieh Kun-shan refused to give up hope – for himself and others like him

Grasping Life

BY MARC LERNER

HSIEH KUN-SHAN went to work at the age of 12 as an apprentice in a feed warehouse on Taiwan's eastern coast. By the time he was 15, he was earning about $30 a month in a factory preparing garments for export. When his boss decided to move the business, the strapping teenager quickly volunteered.

On a crystal clear March morning, Hsieh and his friends carefully disassembled the steam irons and other equipment so they could be hauled to the factory's new location. When it was time to hoist a three-metre section of pipe

nto place, Hsieh offered to climb up on the third-floor balcony.

"Hand it up to me," the muscular teenager called out. "I'll haul it in."

Standing in bare feet, Hsieh reached over the railing, grasping the unwieldy metal pipe with both hands. As he pulled it out of the reach of the men below, it started to wobble, then crashed into an electric line. In a split second, electricity shot up the pipe. His colleagues looked on in horror as Hsieh's body stiffened, his hold on the electrified pipe involuntary tightening.

His skin sizzled, his mouth flew open in a silent scream, and he blacked out. Later, when Hsieh's limp body was loaded into an ambulance, the air was thick with the smell of burning flesh.

WHEN he regained consciousness after that day at the hospital, Hsieh saw his mother struggling to hold back tears. He reached out to grab the railings of the bed to prop himself up, but his charred, throbbing hands couldn't hold on. Sharp pains shot through his right leg.

"We can't save his burned limbs," a doctor explained to his mother. "We'll have to amputate both of his arms and [illegible]."

"How can he live without his hands and feet?" the old woman cried. "Is there any way to save his limbs?"

In the frantic days that followed, Hsieh's parents tried to secure loans for his medical bills and consulted with other doctors. In the end, they realised that the infections spreading through their son's damaged limbs might take his life. "No matter what, we have to try every possible means to save him," his mother finally told the doctors.

Doctors amputated Hsieh's left arm at the shoulder joint. His right arm was cut off at the midpoint of his bicep; his right leg just below the knee. But the real damage seemed to be his mother's broken heart. "I have no right to give up the will to live," he promised her. "And I won't."

The year was 1974, and Hsieh was about to turn 16.

BACK HOME, Hsieh became the focus of his mother's attention. Many nights, her food turned cold while she fed her helpless boy. In the mornings, she bathed and dressed him before taking her own breakfast.

Hsieh was determined to fend for himself. "If we can fashion something to fit over what remains of my right arm, we could attach a spoon to the end," he told his father.

Working from the boy's instructions, the old man built a device that resembled a long, coiled bracelet. It fitted snugly around Hsieh's right bicep. A long metal extension at the end of the coil could hold a specially designed spoon, allowing the boy to feed himself. Next, they built a tap Hsieh could control with his foot so that he could run his own bath.

"How did you manage to dry yourself?" his mother asked after Hsieh's first solo bath since the accident.

"It was easy," he said. "I squeezed into my clothes, and they wiped me dry." His mother couldn't help laughing.

Not long after the accident, a neighbour suggested Hsieh try begging. "If Kun-shan could only squat at the night market or lie in front of a temple to beg, he would have quite an income."

But Hsieh would have none of it. "I've lost three limbs," he said. "I don't want to lose my dignity too."

One evening as he watched his sister doing her homework, Hsieh realised he also could write by holding a pen in his mouth. At first, his teeth ached. But after months of practice, he could produce neat, small-sized characters. Looking for a greater challenge, he began to draw.

"If I can learn to draw portraits, I can make a living," he told his parents. But the illiterate couple couldn't grasp the idea of their disabled son earning any sort of a living. Undeterred, Hsieh threw himself into his drawing and painting, rarely leaving the house.

Later he saw a television programme about Renaissance masterpieces at the Louvre in Paris. *I didn't realise art could exist on such a high level*, he thought.

From that day on, the pen and brush in his mouth would become his best friends. For nearly seven years, he polished his technique. Formal art lessons were too expensive, so he learned by reading books.

In 1980, Hsieh learned about an organisation that offered an in-residence art programme for disabled people. At last, he saw a chance to build an independent life. "You can't do anything by yourself," his mother argued. "Who would look after you?"

But a determined Hsieh left home to live among other disabled artists. When financial problems shut down the programme after just one month, Hsieh and five disabled friends rented an apartment in San Chong in Taipei County. They set up a studio and dubbed it Half-Beat S[illegible]. "Our actions might be s[illegible]," he said. "[illegible] we're all striving to succeed."

I have [illegible] to give up the will to live." Hsieh promised. "And I won't"

CHEN HUI-LAN, a secondary school art teacher, was watching the news when a report about Half-Beat Slower caught her eye. That night, haunted by images of Hsieh painting with a brush clenched between his teeth, she couldn't sleep. "I feel I should do something to help," she told her husband the next day.

Chen sent Hsieh a letter asking for permission to visit. "Perhaps I can help you learn more about p[illegible]."

As she travelled to the studio on a

winter day in 1980, she worried about her limited experience dealing with the disabled. But Hsieh's disarming smile put her at ease. They spent the afternoon talking about art, looking at his paintings and laughing.

After their first meeting, Hsieh often went to Chen's school and asked for her advice. Chen admired his ability to manipulate a brush but knew real artistry required far more. "You need to learn how to convey the feeling of an object using colour, texture, space and perspective," she said.

Impressed by his progress, Chen and three of her colleagues each donated $15 a month to help him meet his expenses. Hsieh was deeply moved that they didn't expect anything in return. He told himself that some day he would extend their spirit of giving and help others whenever he could.

Chen wasn't the only person moved by the news report about Half-Beat Slower. Lin Shu-fen, a pretty young student with delicate features and an interest in art, visited the studio with a watermelon under her arm. She soon was captivated by Hsieh's infectious smile and good humour. As the months passed, they began to paint together.

Hsieh regularly visited exhibitions, hoping to learn from the work of other artists. At the time, Wu Ai-sun was one of Taiwan's most highly regarded painters. "His paintings come to life," Hsieh told Chen Hui-an. "He's the artist I'd like to study with." Chen agreed to accompany him to one of Wu's exhibitions.

Hsieh summoned his courage to ask Wu to teach him to paint. "I haven't accepted new students for a long time," he replied. "Come to one of my classes and we'll see how it goes."

At first, the gap between Hsieh and the other students was wide, and his technique — moving his head to manipulate a brush clenched in his teeth — was slow and arduous. But his work ethic was unmatched. He painted at home and brought his work to class for review. After a year, he gained the confidence to paint with the others.

"I've never had a student who so quickly gained insight into painting," Wu told Chen.

After 18 months of classes, Wu sponsored an exhibition of Hsieh's work, and all 28 paintings sold. At his parents' house after the show, Hsieh laid $2,000 on the table. The couple was stunned.

Encouraged by his commercial success, Hsieh submitted an oil painting to the Tai Yang Art Society for an exhibition. But the selection committee rejected the painting. After six consecutive failures, one of his oil paintings was accepted for a show in 1983. With his horizons expanding, Hsieh started night classes to earn his secondary school diploma.

One night, Hsieh asked his younger sister to help him repair the pages of a frayed textbook. As she turned a page, a sharp edge accidentally cut

across his right eye. At the hospital, the doctor discovered Hsieh had a detached retina. After two operations failed to restore his sight, he took the setback with typical determination and optimism.

"If my right eye cannot see, then I won't see the evil of others," he told the doctor. "If my left eye can still see, I will see the good of people."

In 1985, Hsieh held an exhibition in Taipei. He and Lin decided to marry that same year. She assured her parents that her boyfriend was a loving, hard-working man of unbounded optimism whose handicaps would prove to be of little consequence.

Hsieh has worked tirelessly not only to become a successful artist but also to rekindle the spirits of others.

"I focus on what I can still do, rather than on what I can't," Hsieh told them. But they refused to give the couple their blessing.

On July 7, 1987, they married at the Taipei Sixth Lin District Court. Lin wore a white dress and carried a bou-

quet of roses Hsieh had given her. "I'll make you happy," he vowed.

Within a few years, Hsieh's career was in full swing. Working at an easel set up in the living room of his three-bedroom flat in Ban Chiau City, Hsieh painted ten hours a day, producing about a dozen still-life paintings a year. He and Lin also started a family. Ning, their first daughter, was born in 1992, and little sister Shiuan came three years later.

In 1994, Hsieh tackled his biggest project. "Golden Fish Pond." Blending vivid colours, the painting sold to a local collector for nearly $2400. Today, its estimated value exceeds $60,000.

His work has been included in a half-dozen national shows, and in 1997 he got a certificate of recognition from the Yamagata International Visual Arts Institute, exposing his work to an international audience in a traveling exhibition.

The couple's happy life has proven that the worries of Lin's parents were unwarranted. "Our marriage has been filled with joy and we're blessed with two wonderful children," Lin says. "Hsieh's courage in facing difficulties and determination in solving problems make me and my daughters feel very secure."

IT'S THAT DETERMINATION that unexpectedly led Hsieh to a second calling, reaching out to those who can draw hope from his considerable achievements.

Social workers who had read about Hsieh's achievements called one day to ask if he'd talk to Lin Jye-shyang. The young man had grown cold and unresponsive in the decade since he was paralysed from the neck down in a motorcycle accident. Day after day, he sat in an old wheelchair in front of a TV, unable to change the channel, adjust the volume or move away.

When Hsieh came to visit, he listened patiently to Lin Jye-shyang's story. "It's best if we go out," Hsieh finally told him. "I have a friend I want you to meet."

Minutes later, they were in a car headed for Jung He City. There, Lin met Tung Fu-tsai, who had suffered a similar accident, but had followed Hsieh's example by focusing on the things he could still do.

Lin watched in amazement as Tung navigated his way around his house in an electric-powered wheelchair. Other devices allowed him to manipulate a spoon, change the TV channel and answer the phone. "I didn't know such things were possible," Lin said, suddenly coming to life.

> "Our marriage has been filled with joy and we're blessed with two wonderful children"

Hsieh helped arrange government aid to provide Lin with a wheelchair that he could control by simply pressing his head against a lever. Hsieh also helped design a special table with a TV remote control, a hands-free telephone and a book rest. Today, Lin uses a chopstick held in his mouth to operate his TV, dial the telephone and turn book pages.

"Hsieh restored my hope," he says. "Now I want to push myself to do more."

Hsieh receives invitations from schools, community centres, even prisons, to speak about his experiences. Many of the speeches are done for charity. He also does motivational talks for companies, earning as much as $300 an hour. The extra income has helped make Hsieh financially secure and has given him the freedom to explore new horizons with his art, moving towards semi-abstract works.

Hsieh, his wife Lin and their two children Ning and Shiuan. In the background is one of Hsieh's works

"My disabilities never deterred me from being a free man," he says. "My sleeves may be empty but I can grasp a life of happiness."

SPELL CZECH

Eye halve a speling chequer. It came with my pea sea.
It plainly marques four my revue miss steaks eye kin knot see.
As soon as a mist ache is maid, it nose and eye can put the error rite.

Asia's biggest movie star is looking for new challenges

ACTION MAN

INTERVIEW BY
PETER DOBKIN HILL
AND JOEL FORN

JACKIE CHAN (in 1998) still likes to show off. He waves his arms around as he talks, he puts his face right up to yours, and at one point he jumps up to demonstrate one of his world-famous kicks.

In a sense, Chan has never stopped moving. Born into a poor Hong Kong family in 1954, he was sent to the China Drama Academy at the age of seven. Over the next ten years, he was subjected to a brutal training regimen meant to prepare him as a Chinese opera performer. Instead, when he emerged

from the school, he threw himself into Hong Kong's fast-paced movie industry as a stuntman. By 1978 he was a fully fledged movie star in Asia, his fame built on a combination of his everyman comic persona and a willingness to perform ever more dangerous stunts.

By the 1990s, he had achieved it all writing, directing and starring in some of the region's biggest action flicks. But Hollywood remained out of reach. Then *Rush Hour*, an East-meets-West action comedy co-starring Chris Tucker, became an unexpected hit. A series of Hollywood hits followed, and Chan became a worldwide phenomenon.

His latest big-budget extravaganza is *Around the World in 80 Days*, a reworking of the classic Jules Verne tale. Chan plays Passepartout, a Chinese thief who steals a valuable jade Buddha and then seeks refuge in the travelling companionship of the eccentric Phileas Fogg, played by Steve Coogan.

Chan, who turned 50 in April, sat down with Reader's Digest recently in Hong Kong to talk about his latest film, his charity work and other aspects of his life. He was relaxed and spoke candidly – at times pragmatic, at times philosophical. Here are excerpts from our three-hour interview.

RD: *Around the World in 80 Days* isn't a movie that people would immediately associate with Jackie Chan, and Passepartout is someone most people would think of as a European character. Were you concerned about this?

Chan: No. A script can always change. Like *The Seven Samurai* – they changed the whole script into a Western [*The Magnificent Seven*]. I think it makes sense in *Around the World in 80 Days*. I'm a good thief in England and have to rush back to China. I use Phileas Fogg's inventions to find the fastest way.

RD: Is there action in the movie?

Chan: Yes, a lot of action.

RD: You mix it up with your old friend Sammo Hung, do you?

Chan: I try my best to bring Chinese actors, my friends, to the American market. Like Daniel Wu. Nobody knows him in Hollywood. In my movie, he's a villain. The director already told me, "Wow, this guy is good. I'll remember next time to use him." Maybe one day he'll become another Jackie Chan in Hollywood.

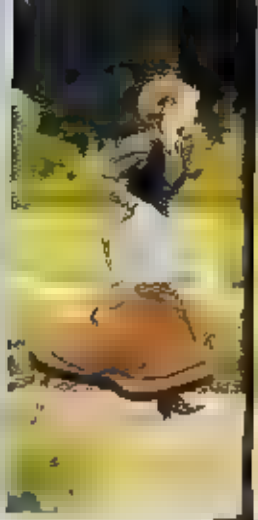
RD: You turned 50 on April 7. What did you do to celebrate?

Chan: I told my manager that on my birthday I want to give, I don't want to receive. So I spent the month of April doing charity work.

RD: You dedicate a lot of time to different causes around the world. Why?

Chan: I was born into a poor family, and I stayed at an opera martial arts school for ten years. Every month the Red Cross would come, and we would wait in line for clothes, shoes or milk powder. One day, a priest gave me some milk. I said "Thank you." He said, "Don't thank me," he said. "When you're grown up, you will help other people." I'll never forget his face.

Later I wanted to start the Jackie Chan Foundation, but it was always "tomorrow." Then one day I fell from a tree in Yugoslavia [while filming *Armour of God* in 1986]. I almost died. In



Clockwise from top left: Chan in *Around the World in 80 Days* with co-stars Steve Coogan and Cecile de France; conquering Hollywood in the first *Rush Hour*; leaping into action in *Mr Nice Guy*

"I'm a bad boy. Doing charity work turns me into a good person"

the hospital, I thought: *There are so many things I haven't done.* That's when I started the Jackie Chan Foundation.

RD: So you have become a good guy?
Chan: No, I'm a bad boy. I want to have fun. But Taiwan wants me to be their police ambassador. China their Olympic ambassador, Hong Kong the tourist ambassador. It gives me pleasure. And this turns me into a good person.

Then Singapore asked me, "Can you do anti-smoking?" (I replied.) "No. I smoke." Then I ask myself, *Why do I smoke?* And I quit. Now I am their anti-smoking ambassador.

RD: You've just been named a United Nations Goodwill Ambassador. How did that come about?
Chan: I have been doing some fund-raisers and charity work in the US – Las Vegas, San Francisco, LA – and now Cambodia. UNICEF called and asked, "Can we appoint you as a good will ambassador?" I said yes, but the title doesn't mean anything to me. I'd still go to Cambodia.

RD: You have described your time at the China Drama Academy as torture, but you don't seem angry about the experience. Why not?
Chan: I got beaten, yeah. In the old days, you got used to it. But I would never let my son to go to this kind of school. This generation couldn't take it. They're not like us – we fall, we suffer, we go again. But now the father works hard, becomes middle class, and just gives everything to the baby.

RD: Are you sorry that things have changed so much?
Chan: Sometimes. I find children too spoiled. In Cambodia, six out of seven children who came to greet me had lost limbs. They had done nothing wrong. They didn't fight the war, they just happened to step on mines. But they were brave enough to say that luckily it wasn't their sister or father who stepped on the mine.

I very much regretted that I didn't bring my son. When he was growing up, we had a good family life. Not perfect. I was not with him all the time. I was traveling. My wife always took care of my son, gave him everything he likes.

RD: In the early 1980s, you made a few movies in Hollywood, but they didn't really take off. Even in the face of failure, you've managed to press on. What keeps you going in the bad times?
Chan: Every day I receive so many letters from my fans. They keep me going. Besides if I'm not filming, what will I do?

RD: Are you looking for new challenges?
Chan: For me, it's more drama, more acting. I really hope one day I could

"I can still keep fighting

Chan says the climactic scene from The Accidental Spy, in which his character rescues a family from a burning oil truck, was inspired by the July 1971 Reader's Digest article "Hans Hugger's Ride With Death"

[illegible] like *Kramer Vs Kramer*, or like *The Sound of Music*.

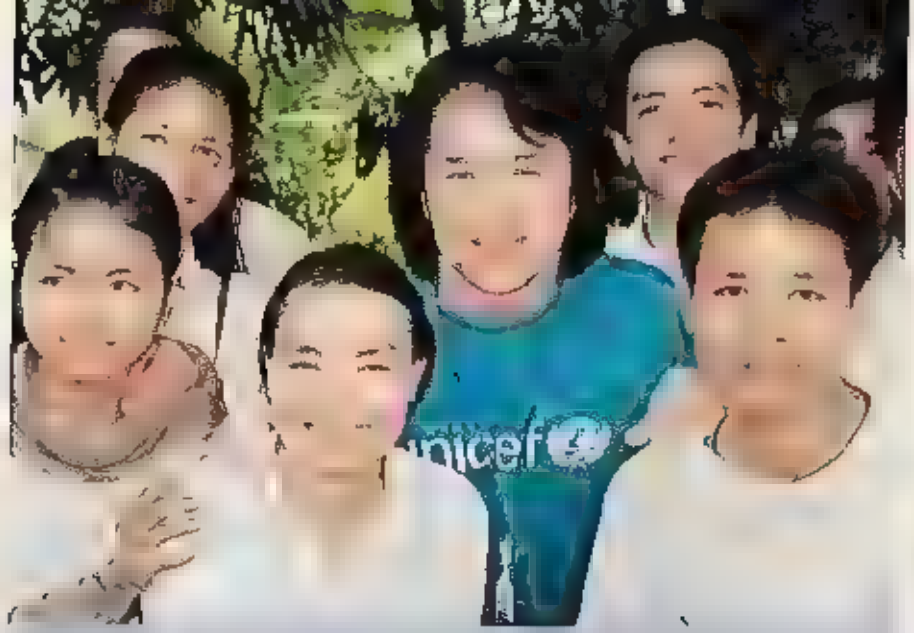
How long can I keep fighting? I can still do it but not like in the old days – boom, out the window in one take. I might never get up again.

Now, I might use the window, but first step on the floor, touch the wall, and then jump out. The audience says, "Wow, that guy is still good." No, I'm clever. I can use technique and the camera angle to make myself look good.

RD: Do you think before long you will make movies that have no action and possibly even no comedy?
Chan: No way in America. In Asia, yes, my audience knows I'm getting old. That's why I'm back and forth. After I made *Around the World in 80 Days*, I came back to Hong Kong to make *The New Police Story*. Between now and September I make another one – it's like another Indiana Jones. Then in September it's *Rush Hour III*.

RD: You've been subject to a lot of speculation in the media about your private life. How do you deal with that?
Chan: The media trained me to become a good man. I'm a normal human being. I've a lot of good friends, we go

but not like I did in the old days"



During his April trip to Cambodia, Chan visited Nyemo, a group that helps women and children affected by HIV/AIDS. He also met young victims of landmines

to karaoke, we go for drinks. The paparazzi says, "See, Jackie, drunk, still driving, maybe no seat belt."

Really, sometimes I thank them. [Now] before I drink, I'm careful.

RD: What advice would you give to your son Jaycee and other young people trying to get into show business?
Chan: New talent comes and goes. If you want to stay, you must have more talent than the others. With my son, I'm satisfied with what he does right now. He can write songs, play music, dance.

RD: Do you worry that people will only look at Jaycee as Jackie Chan's son and won't accept him for what he is?
Chan: No. I tell him, "Look, you have to accept it because you are my son."

But more important, I used to be very protective and I was scared he might be kidnapped. Then he wrote a song called "Man-Made Walls." [The lyrics] said the first wall was me, the second wall, mum, the third wall was the teacher, the fourth wall was all the people surrounding him. The song says everybody needs freedom. After I listened to this song, I tell myself I cannot protect him every day.

RD: If you had all the control and all the money that you wanted, what movie would you make?
Chan: There are two movies. Genghis Khan and Ngok Fe [an historical Chi-

nese legend]. I want to use real armies instead of special effects. I want to show the real army on the screen, real horses in the desert.

RD: How did the deaths of Anita Mui and Leslie Cheung affect you?
Chan: Of course, that hurt. I know we have to go through the different stages in life, but unfortunately, one suffered from cancer [Mui] and the other one committed suicide [Cheung].

It came to me as a bigger shock for Leslie because it just happened like that. [Chan snaps his fingers]. For Anita, I would have said for her go earlier if that had been legal in Hong Kong. That would have lessened her suffering.

RD: When will you retire?
Chan: I don't know. I've talked about retiring many times. Maybe one day I will start Jackie Chan Foundations everywhere. But maybe one day, I'll be tired of doing charity, and I'll want to be by myself. I just don't know.

RD: Are you afraid of getting old?
Chan: Oh no, you cannot change that. I just want to do lots of good things. Then when I pass away, I will be happy. The only thing is I'm running out of time.

RD: If you were to die today, what would you like to tell the world, in one sentence?
Chan: Peace.

RD: Why peace?
Chan: Peace to me implies more love for people. This world will be a much better one if everybody cares more about others.

I have a project in mind. I cannot say it will succeed, but I will give it a go. I have already about 50 hectares of land in China, and I will establish a school and recruit students from all over the world. We will start with this prototype of less than 200 people living together, learning the cultures of others, making movies.

If there are ten million more Jackie Chans, then this [idea] will flourish and bear fruit. We will know others better.

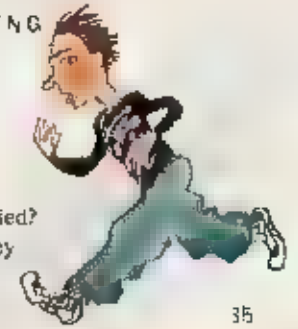
Visit our website to read more of our interview with Jackie Chan.

LOVE IS A MANY ICKY THING

Some kids give the straight dope.

Q: What would you do on a first date that was turning sour?
A: I'd run home and play dead. CRAIG, AGE 9

Q: How can a stranger tell if two people are married?
A: You might have to guess, based on whether they seem to be yelling at the same kids. DERRICK, AGE 8



LAUGHTER, THE BEST MEDICINE

A FRENCH POODLE and a collie were walking down the street. The poodle turned to the collie and complained, "My life is such a mess. My owner is mean, my girlfriend is having an affair with a German shepherd and I'm as nervous as a cat."

"Why don't you go see a psychiatrist?" asked the collie.

"I can't," replied the poodle. "I'm not allowed on the couch."

JOHN W. BAMBA

"I'm sorry, dear. Did you say something pithy?"

LAST NIGHT I played a blank tape at full blast. The mime next door went nuts.

STEVE STEWART

AN 80-YEAR-OLD MAN goes to a doctor for a checkup. The doctor is amazed at his shape. "To what do you attribute your remarkably good health?"

"I'm a turkey hunter and that's why I'm in good shape. Get up before daylight, chase turkeys up and down mountains."

The doctor says, "Well, I'm sure it helps, but there have to be genetic factors. How old was your dad when he died?"

"Who says my dad's dead?"

"You're 80 years old and your dad's alive? How old is he?"

"Dad's 100. In fact, he turkey hunted with me this morning."

"What about your dad's dad how old was he when he died?"

"Who says my granddad's dead?"

"You're 80 years old and your grandfather's still living? How old is he?"

"118."

"I suppose you're going to tell me he went turkey hunting this morning?"

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$ You could earn $100 for your own joke. See page 1

"No. He got married."

The doctor looks at the man in amazement. "Got married? Why would a 118-year-old guy want to get married?"

The old-timer answers, "Who says he wanted to?" ARGEL NICOZOREK

THESE TWO GREEN BEANS are crossing the freeway when one of them is hit by a truck. His friend scrapes him up and rushes him to the hospital. After hours of surgery, the doctor says, "I have good news and bad news."

The healthy green bean says, "OK, give me the good news first."

"Well, he's going to live."

"So, what's the bad news?"

"The bad news is he'll be a vegetable for the rest of his life."

TWO GUYS are walking their dogs. One guy's got a doberman. The other guy has a chihuahua. The first guy looks up and says, "Hey, here's our favourite watering hole. Let's go in and have a drink."

The second guy says, "Are you kidding? We've got our dogs with us. They won't let us in there."

"No problem, just follow my lead." The first man puts on a pair of dark sunglasses and starts to go into the bar.

The manager happens to be standing by the door and says, "Hold it, hold it! You can't come in here with that dog."

"Why? He's my seeing eye dog."

The manager thinks for a minute and says "Well, OK, come on in."

The second guy says, "What the heck, I'll give it a try." He puts on his dark glasses and walks in.

The manager starts laughing and says, "What do you think you're doing? You can't come in here with that dog."

"He's my seeing eye dog."

"A chihuahua?"

The guy thinks for a minute and says, "A chihuahua? They gave me a chihuahua?" DAVID FUSCO

A KNOCK sounded on the old cabin door one cold, windy night. "Jesse? You all right, Jesse?" a voice called. "We found a body down by the creek, and we were worried because it looked a lot like you."

"What was the body wearing?" Jesse asked.

"Clothes like yours."

"Was he big or small?"

"Biggish. Kind of like you."

"Boots like mine too?"

"Yes."

"Was he shaved?"

"Yes."

"Then it must have been somebody else." WorstJokes.com

TWO STARVING MEN are wandering in the desert when in the distance they see a tree, apparently covered in bacon strips. One of the men dashes towards it, but is shot.

As he expires he gasps to his companion, "Don't come any closer. It's not a bacon tree. It's a ham bush." DOREEN CORP

After five decades, an old soldier and the man he saved find each other again

Reunited

BY BRYAN GRULEY

LIFE WAS FINALLY good for Martin Weigen. After a horrific childhood – World War II, Dachau, his family being wiped out – Weigen and his wife, Margareta, lived in a big white house on a property near Hartford, Connecticut. They had a cottage on Long Island Sound for weekends and vacations. With his grown children, Edward Weigen and Barbara Bergren, he owned and managed three profitable residential care homes.

Then one day in March 2001, Weigen received an unusual phone call. A man named Howard Chandler who said he was from Weigen's old hometown in Poland, told Weigen someone was looking for him. On an index card, Weigen jotted a name – Wickers – and a phone number. He was a little hard of hearing. He wasn't sure who "Wickers" was.

Martin Weigen loved to brag about his grandchildren and great granddaughter. But he rarely talked about the mother, father and sister he'd lost. Questions about his childhood

were met with halting answers and, sometimes, tears. His family knew almost nothing about his time in the concentration camps. When his grandson asked about the number tattooed on his left forearm – A19104 – all he could say was "Bad people put that down." As he grew older, his [illegible]

[illegible] daughter Barbara [illegible] April 3 [illegible] was [illegible] The name Wickers meant not[illegible]her, but her dad seemed eager to call. He listened on one phone while she talked from another.

John Withers II picked up the phone in his home library in Rockville, Maryland. Propped on the desk before him was a picture of a smiling young man in a US army uniform, his soft cap at a jaunty angle. On the back was written, "To my good friend, Lieutenant John L. Withers."

"Mr Wickers?" Barbara Bergren said. "Withers," he corrected.

She didn't know that name either. "I believe you're looking for a relative [illegible]"

Withers's heart sank. After all his efforts to find the man he knew as Peewee, was he dead? He identified himself and asked if she was related to Mieczysław Wajgenszperg.

"Yes, he's sitting right here," Bergren answered. Then Weigen cut in. "You are the son of Lieutenant John L. Withers of North Carolina?"

Withers said that he was.

Bergren turned to look at her father. His eyes had filled with tears. He whispered: "I know John Withers."

In 1945, Lieutenant John Withers was assigned to one of the quartermaster truck companies ferrying supplies to the front lines in Europe. As a black man in charge of an all-black unit, Withers was at war for freedoms he and his men didn't have at home. But he had his own dream: to leave America's segregated South, where he had grown up in near-poverty, become a professor and join the American middle class.

He had already earned a bachelor's degree in social sciences from North Carolina A&T, and, in 1941, a master's degree in economics from the University of Wisconsin. He hoped to get a PhD through the GI Bill after the war. But he had to keep his record clean.

When he learned that his men had been hiding two refugees from the recently liberated Dachau concentration camp, Withers wasn't happy. Quartermaster units had orders to avoid contact with the former prisoners; the army feared the men in the supply convoys would pick up diseases. Withers worried that sheltering these refugees might get him a dishonourable discharge – ending his shot at the GI Bill, and all his dreams as well.

Yet when his soldiers brought the men they called Peewee and Salomon before him, Withers was surprised to see they were little more than boys. Dressed in the rags they'd worn at the camp, the two had sores pocking their bony arms and legs, and their sunken eyes sought his compassion.

Withers assumed Peewee and Salomon would be returned to Dachau, where thousands of former prisoners were still convalescing. He'd been to the camp on a bread and milk delivery shortly after it was liberated. He'd seen bodies decomposing in an open ditch, smelled the rotting flesh. How could he send them back?

"Keep them," he blurted to his men. "We're going to take care of them."

And so Peewee and Salomon spent more than a year with Quartermaster Truck Company 35.2, helping out with chores, getting their strength back. When white officers came around, the [illegible] refugees hid.

The two young men learned English [illegible] spent many evenings talking with the lieutenant. 'Get to the United States and you'll be all right," Withers told them. He didn't speak of racism or anti-Semitism because "they didn't need anything negative," he recalled. He wondered how Peewee and Salomon could remain so happy and gentle after what they'd endured. "They didn't become hateful or hostile in return," he said decades later. "They didn't become bitter or apathetic. That was something I've kept with me all my life: that it is possible for someone – me, anyone – to overcome the obstacles in his path without losing himself, and face prejudice without becoming prejudiced in return."

The day Lieutenant Withers went home in December 1946, the two refugees waited near his jeep. By then both were healthy again. There was no longer any need for them to hide. Peewee had an apartment in the town of Bamberg, Germany, and a job at a machine- and auto-repair shop. He and Salomon presented the lieutenant with a photo album embossed with his name. Withers gave them each a pen and his mother's Greensboro, North Carolina, address. Then they saluted before Lieutenant Withers rumbled away. He took with him in his footlocker a picture Peewee had given him. It showed the young Pole smiling in a borrowed US army uniform.

Five decades later, the picture found its way to John Withers II, John Withers's eldest son, who began a search for the two men he'd been hearing about since childhood.

His father's wartime dream had come true: He used the GI Bill to earn a PhD in political science from the University of Chicago. He taught at universities in North Carolina and Michigan before joining the US Agency for International Development, where he spent 21 years on assignments from Laos to Kenya before retiring in 1979. As the family travelled the globe, John Withers talked often of Peewee and Salomon. In the eyes of John II, the two men became like long-lost uncles. He frequently asked his father why he hadn't tried to find them. Withers said he wouldn't know where

Left: Reunion. Right: seated (l. to r.), Martin Weigen (with grandson Chris), John Withers, Margareta Weigen. Standing (l. to r.), John Withers II Daisy Withers (Mrs John Withers, Sr.)

to begin, Al, he knew was Peewee's real name.

When John Withers II was 51, he received a one year sabbatical from his job with the US State Department and began his hunt for the two men. His search for Peewee led him to Yad Vashem, the vast repository of Holocaust records in Israel, and then to Christopher Browning, a University of North Carolina historian who had collected testimonies of 235 survivors from Starachowice, Peewee's hometown. One of these men was Howard Chandler, formerly known as Chaim Wajchendler. He knew Peewee and contacted him in Connecticut.

Three weeks later Martin Weigen and John Withers met at Hartford's Bradley International Airport. Weigen was 72, with feathery white hair and hearing aids. Withers, 84, wore a tan cap on his bald head and was shorter now than his old friend.

The men embraced. "Lieutenant John," said Weigen.

"Peewee," said Withers.

They were inseparable, holding hands and reminiscing while their families got to know one another. Weigen had told his children that a black soldier helped him during the war, but he hadn't said much more.

As John II and his wife started asking Weigen about the Nazi camps, Edward Weigen and Barbara Bergren worried that this would be too painful for their father. But with John Withers at his side, Weigen opened up. Over dinner one evening that the family captured on videotape, he talked about his childhood and what his father had done for a living. "You ever hear that?" Edward, 43, asked his sister. "I didn't."

Weigen talked about life in the Starachowice ghetto and described his journey to Dachau. He pulled out photos that his kids had never seen, including one of him with his sister, Klara, in the ghetto.

That was the beginning of a great friendship between the families. The elder John Withers sent cards, letters and birthday gifts to the Weigen and Bergren children. In e-mails, Barbara Bergren referred to John II as "my newfound brother." They shared the sadness when John II learned that Salomon had died. In the summer of 2002, Edward and his family visited the Witherses in Maryland, and the families began planning another Connecticut reunion for the fall of 2003.

But it was not to be. Martin Weigen died on October 16 of colon cancer, at the age of 75. At his memorial service, photos were on display: Mieczyslaw with his sister and mother on a summer day, Peewee and Salomon grinning with a black soldier named Dave; Weigen and Withers hugging.

The room fell silent as Barbara Bergren asked Withers to stand. "For what you did that year to bring him back to us, we will be for ever grateful," she said. "We love you for it." John Withers had changed her father's life twice: first by giving him a future and then by giving him back his past.

THAT'S A LOT OF BULL

The story goes that a local car dealer, who was known to have taken advantage of some people in the community, wanted to purchase a cow from a farmer. So the farmer priced the cow in a way the car dealer could understand.

BASIC COW $499.95
Shipping and handling: $35.75
Extra stomach: $79.25
Two-tone exterior: $143.50
Deluxe dual horns: $59.25
Automatic fly swatter: $74.55
Four spigot/high-output drain system: $149.20
Automatic fertilizer attachment: $339.40
Farmer's suggested list price: $379.85
Additional dealer adjustments: $300.00
TOTAL LIST PRICE (including options): $1,679.85

From the Internet

10 Keys to True Happiness

The best part – it's well within your reach

BY BOB HOLMES, KURT KLEINER, KATE DOUGLAS, MICHAEL BOND

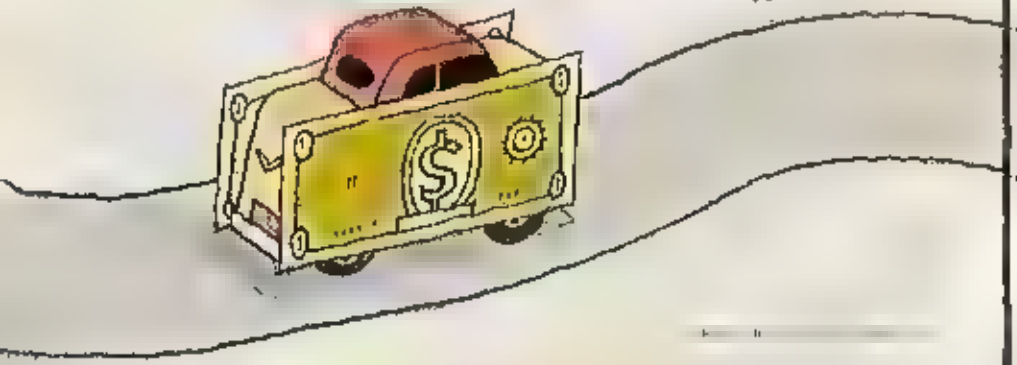
BETTER LIVING through science is possible. Over the last 70 years or so, researchers have been probing happy and unhappy people, and they're finally zeroing in on the factors that make a difference. What follows are the top ten. By the way: the experts think your genes account for about 50 per cent of your disposition; the other nine factors make up the rest.

1 Wealth

Money can buy a degree of happiness. But once you can afford to feed, clothe and house yourself, each extra dollar makes less and less difference.

Whenever and wherever they look, scientists have found that, on average, wealthier people are happier. But the link between money and happiness is complicated. In the past 50 years, average income has skyrocketed in industrialised countries, yet happiness levels have remained static. Once your basic needs are met, money seems to boost happiness only if you have more than your friends, neighbours and colleagues.

"Dollars buy status, and status makes people feel better," explains Andrew Oswald, an economist at Warwick University in Coventry, England. This helps to explain why people who can seek status in other ways – scientists or actors, for example – may happily accept relatively poorly paid jobs.



2 Desire

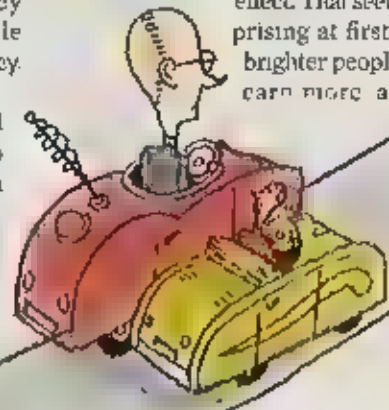
How much stuff do you need to feel good? In the 1980s, Canadian political scientist Alex Michalos asked 18,000 university students in 39 countries to rate their happiness on a numeric scale. Then he asked them how close they were to having all they wanted. He found that the people whose aspirations – not just for money, but for friends, family, job, health, the works – soared furthest beyond what they already had tended to be less happy than those who perceived a smaller gap. Indeed, the size of the gap predicted happiness about five times better than income alone. "The gap measures just blow away the absolute measures of income," says Michalos.

This "aspiration gap" might explain why most people fail to get much happier as their salaries rise. Instead of satisfying our desires, most of us merely want more. In surveys over the past two decades, people were asked to list the material possessions they thought important to "the good life." The researchers found that the more of these goods people already had, the longer their list was. The good life remained always just out of reach.

3 Intelligence

Only a few surveys have examined whether smart people are happier, but they indicate that intelligence has no effect. That seems surprising at first, since brighter people often earn more and the rich tend to be happier.

Some researchers speculate that brighter people could have higher expectations and thus be dissatisfied with anything less than the highest achievements. "Or maybe scoring high in an IQ test – which means you have a high vocabulary



and can rotate things in your mind – doesn't have a lot to do with your ability to get along well with people," says psychologist Ed Diener. He thinks "social intelligence" could be the real key to happiness.

1 Genetics

Are some people born happy or unhappy? David Lykken, a behavioural geneticist and former professor of psychology, believes our feeling of well-being at any moment is determined half by what is going on in our lives at that time and half by a "set point" of happiness, which is up to 90 per cent genetically determined and to which we eventually return after dramatic events. "While our happiness set point is largely determined by our genes," explains Lykken, "whether we bounce along above it or slump along under it depends on our – or our parents' – good sense and good training."

Lykken found that genetic variation accounted for between 44 and 55 per cent of the difference in happiness levels. Neither income, marital status, religion nor education accounted for any more than about three per cent.

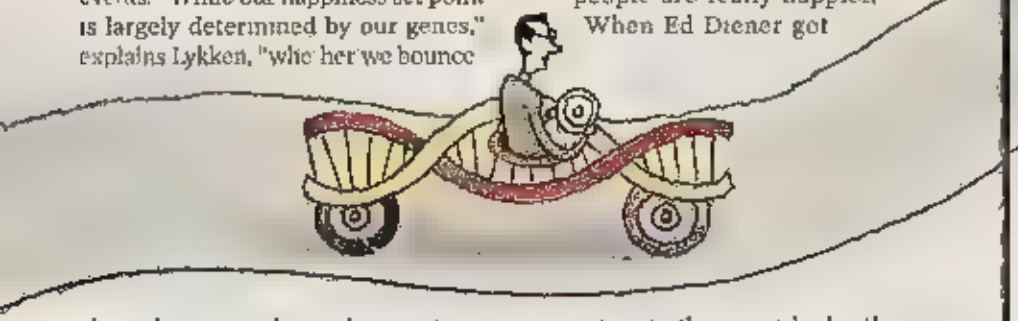
But whether you trudge through life on the low side of your set point or skip along on the high side is up to you. Many studies have shown that extroverts tend to be happier than most people, and a lot happier than introverts. And research has found that putting people in a good mood makes them more sociable.

Michael Cunningham of the University of Louisville, Kentucky, showed that people were more talkative and open with others after seeing a happy film than after watching a sad one. Theoretically, even someone with a low set point can boost his or her outlook

5 Beauty

First the bad news: good-looking people are really happier. When Ed Diener got people to rate their own looks, there was a "small but positive effect of physical attractiveness on subjective well-being."

Perhaps the explanation is that life is kinder to the beautiful. Or it could be more subtle than that. The most attractive faces are highly symmetrical, and there is evidence that symmetry is a reflection of good genes and a healthy immune system. So perhaps



beautiful people are happier because they are healthier.

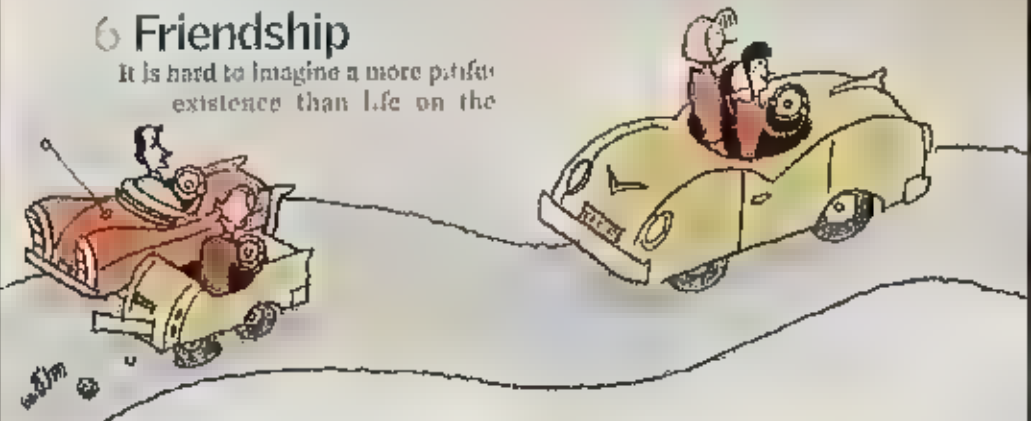
You could cash in on beauty's emotional high even if you aren't gorgeous – if you *believe* that you look great. Unfortunately, studies show that women tend to think they are too fat and men worry about being puny.

6 Friendship

It is hard to imagine a more painful existence than life on the streets of Calcutta or in one of its teeming slums, or making a living there as a prostitute. Yet despite the poverty and squalor they face, these people are much happier than you might imagine.

Diener interviewed 83 people from those three groups and measured their life satisfaction using a scale for which a score of 2 is considered neutral. Overall, they averaged 1.93 – not great, but creditable, compared with a control group of middle-class city students who scored 2.43. And the slum dwellers, who were happiest of the three disadvantaged groups, scored 2.23, not significantly different from the students' score.

"We think social relationships are partly responsible," says Diener. He says all three deprived groups got high satisfaction ratings in specific areas such as family (2.5) and friends (2.4). Slum dwellers did particularly well, perhaps because they can cash in on the social support of the extended family in Indian culture.



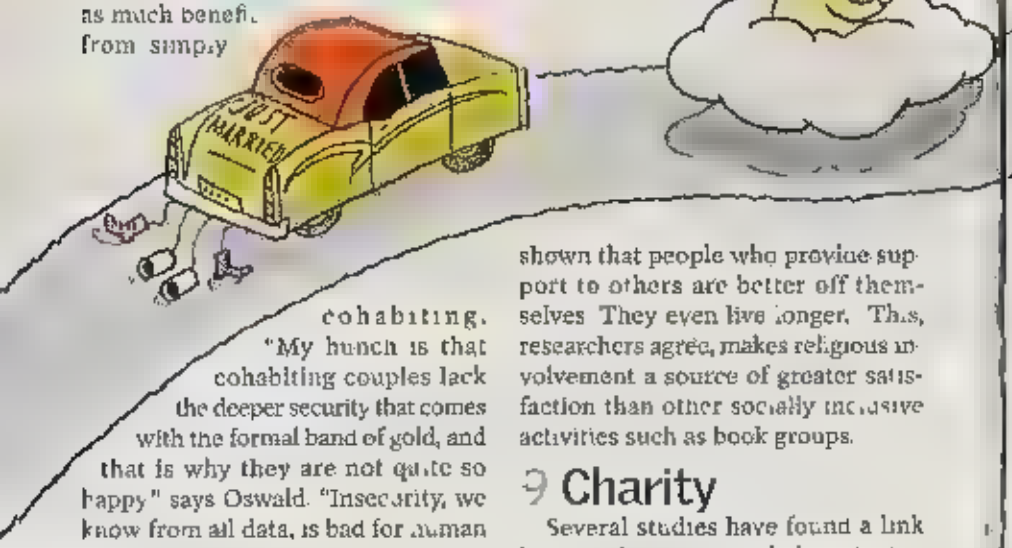
7 Marriage

In an analysis of reports from 42 countries, researchers found that married people are consistently happier than singles. The effect is small, but that still begs the question: does marriage make you happy, or are happy people simply more likely to get married?

Both answers may be true. In a study that followed more than 30,000 Germans for 15 years, Diener and his colleagues found that happy people are more likely to get married and stay married. But anyone can improve his or her mood by getting married. The effect begins about a year before the "happy day" and lasts for at least a

year afterwards. For most people, satisfaction levels return to their baseline, but the researchers say this conceals the fact that a good marriage can have a permanent positive effect. Furthermore, people who are less happy to begin with will get a bigger boost from marriage.

It seems there's something special about signing that piece of paper. The research shows that you can't get as much benefit from simply cohabiting. "My hunch is that cohabiting couples lack the deeper security that comes with the formal band of gold, and that is why they are not quite so happy," says Oswald. "Insecurity, we know from all data, is bad for human beings."



Faith

Karl Marx was fairly close to the mark when he described religion as an opiate for the masses. Of the dozens of studies that have looked at religion and happiness, the vast majority have found a positive link.

Belief in an afterlife can give people meaning and purpose and reduce the feeling of being alone in the world, says Harold Koenig of Duke University Medical Centre in Durham, North Carolina, especially as people age. "You really see the effect in times of stress. Religious belief can be a very powerful way of coping with adversity."

Religion also brings social interaction and support. But Koenig believes it is not just about receiving. "Studies have shown that people who provide support to others are better off themselves. They even live longer. This, researchers agree, makes religious involvement a source of greater satisfaction than other socially inclusive activities such as book groups.

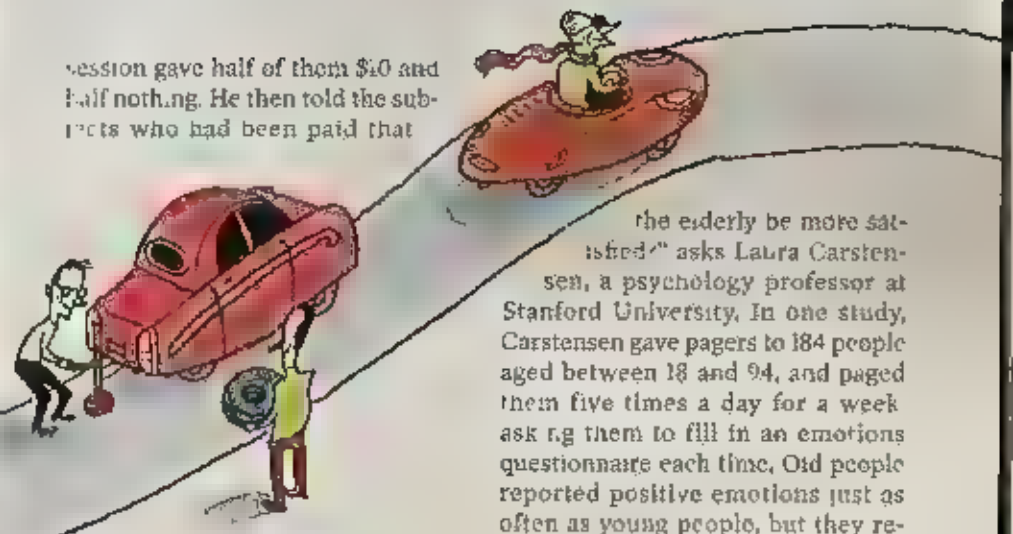
Charity

Several studies have found a link between happiness and altruistic behaviour. But as with many behavioural traits, it is not always clear whether doing good makes you feel good, or whether happy people are more likely to be altruistic.

James Konow, an economist at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, tried to tease apart cause and effect in a lab experiment. He recruited subjects to answer questionnaires, and towards the end of the session gave half of them $10 and half nothing. He then told the subjects who had been paid that they could share their money with those who had not been compensated.

Konow found that the happier students were overall the more likely they were to share the money. However being in a happy mood on the day of the test did not make them any more generous, and students who gave did not report any immediate increase in happiness. In fact, they were slightly less happy.

But those who shared their money were more likely to show the personality traits of a "self-actualiser" – they were concerned with their own personal growth and improvement. Konow thinks that while a single act of generosity did not make his subjects happier, the cumulative effects of being a generous person did.



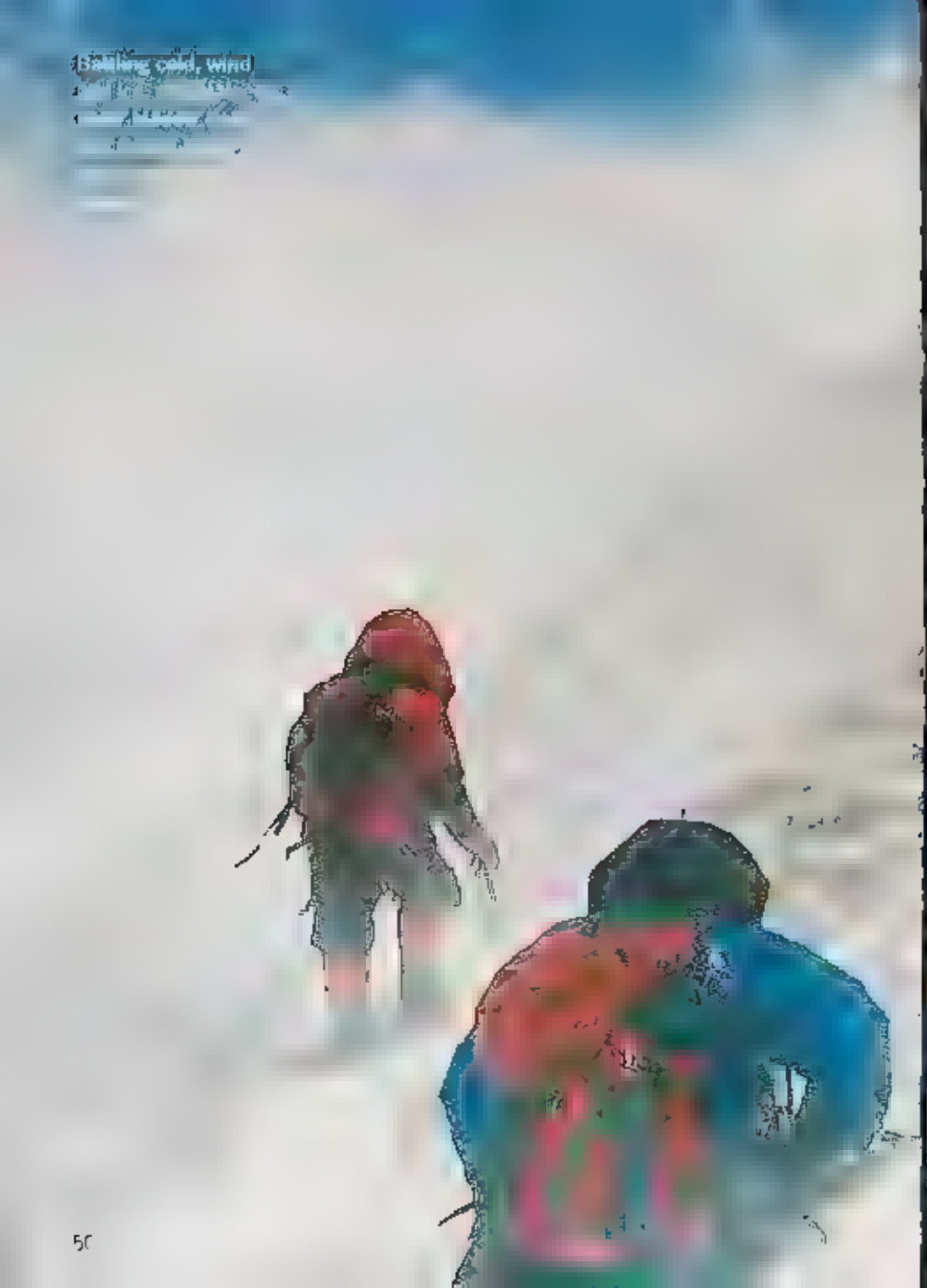
Age

Old age may not be so bad. "Given all the problems of ageing, how could the elderly be more satisfied?" asks Laura Carstensen, a psychology professor at Stanford University. In one study, Carstensen gave pagers to 184 people aged between 18 and 94, and paged them five times a day for a week, asking them to fill in an emotions questionnaire each time. Old people reported positive emotions just as often as young people, but they reported negative emotions much less frequently.

Why are old people happier? Some scientists suggest older people may expect life to be harder and learn to live with it, or they're more realistic about their goals, setting only ones that they know they can achieve. But Carstensen thinks that with time running out, older people have learned to focus on things that make them happy and let go of those that don't.

"People realise not only what they have, but also that what they have cannot last for ever," Carstensen says. "A goodbye kiss to a spouse at the age of 85, for example, may elicit far more complex emotional responses than a similar kiss to a spouse at the age of 20."

rdasia.com What's your personal key to happiness? We want to hear your secrets to a happier life. Share your thoughts at rdasia.com



Broken Dreams on the NORTH FACE

0 attempts

Around 8 o'clock on a bitter cold morning in May 2003, mountain climber Peter Madew, a lanky 37-year-old construction engineer from Australia, joined the queue for the final ascent of the notorious North Face of Mount Everest. It was day [illegible] and [illegible] Madew, with some 20 other climbers that day, hoped to repeat Sir Edmund Hillary's feat 50 years earlier. And they were only 220 metres from the summit

Conan Harrod (left) and Walid Abuhaidar (second left) joined Peter Madew (second right) at Advanced Base Camp

Madew was lucky to have got this far. Soon after he and his two climbing partners broke camp at 3 a.m. his helmet torch gave out and in the darkness he nearly walked off a cliff – a 3000-metre straight drop. Luckily for him and his partners – British computer expert Conan Harrod, 34, and Boston student Walid Abuhaidar, 23 – Madew pulled back, just a step or two from the edge.

The climbers didn't know each other before they met in Kathmandu with three others at the beginning of the expedition. They had each paid British-based expedition organisers Adventure Peaks roughly $16,000 to arrange their climb, camps, food and Sherpa guides. But as they trained in the weeks before their attempt on the summit, trekking up and down the lower parts of Everest to acclimate their bodies to the energy-sapping effects of high altitude, Madew, Harrod and Abuhaidar formed a strong bond. And as fate would have it, the three were the last from the Adventure Peaks group still to be making the climb to the top. The others had all dropped out.

'The day had dawned cloudy but

clearing. The wind had dropped in line with the long-range weather forecasts that had marked it as a day of opportunity for the climbers perched at various points on the mountain to have a go at the summit. The Adventure Peaks trio paused to watch Everest's misty pink dawn before continuing on. Soon they came upon the preserved body of a climber who had died an indeterminate time before. Despite the unsettling sight of the dead man, their mood was upbeat, strong and confident. Madew felt certain they would get to the top. Only two of the infamous "Three Steps" – sheer rock faces guarding the summit – remained to be scaled.

Abuhaidar, who had begun serious climbing only two years earlier after injuring his knee in a skiing accident, had taken the lead. With a chance that day to become the youngest American to climb Everest from the North Ridge, he had moved ahead of the other two, but was halted behind a bottleneck of climbers – some clearly struggling scaling a rickety ladder up the Second Step not far from the summit. He was freezing and frustrated, and couldn't see his partners below.

Harrod was next in line, with Madew right behind, but climbers from other expeditions were interspersed between them and Abuhaidar. Harrod had hitched himself to a fixed rope anchored to the rock face that followed a narrow, icy ledge. Two climbers – an American and his Sherpa – were coming down, attached to the same rope. They had abandoned their summit attempt due to a gathering snowstorm. A golfing engineer, the 48-year-old American had planned to hit a golf ball off the summit but now believed he was getting frostbite.

Suddenly the American pitched off the ledge – as if a trap door had sprung open beneath him – and wrenched off his Sherpa. The fixed rope broke the fall of the two men but could not hold

them. The rope's mid point anchor ripped out of the rock and the rope suddenly sagged, catapulting Harrod off the ledge. He crashed heavily down the cliffside on his left leg. The American and his Sherpa clawed back to the ledge, helping boost Harrod up with them. But when Harrod tried to stand his left leg collapsed and he let out a shriek of agony. His leg was broken.

Madew saw the accident and, concerned that the rope holding the man would give way altogether, quickly unclipped himself from it and made his way up. When he arrived he could see that Harrod was badly hurt. He was on his haunches and couldn't get up. His eyes were rolling round in his head, and he was obviously in a lot of pain.

BOTH MEN were on the ledge with no safety rope. Just to their right was Everest's menacing North Face, dropping 2400 metres. The wind was starting to roar, and they had exhausted their first oxygen bottles. They had been climbing for six hours.

Madew rasped rapid-fire questions to Harrod through his oxygen mask: are you sure you've broken your leg? Absolutely sure? He didn't want to be in any doubt. Like anybody who attempts Everest, Madew needed a good reason to turn back.

But Harrod was sure. He could feel the shattered bones in his upper ankle grinding together. Hardly anyone lives after breaking a leg this high on Everest. The preserved bodies scattered around the mountain's high altitude death zone above 8000 metres bore testimony to the Everest maxim: immobilisation is death.

Climbing at this altitude on Everest, even with oxygen, has been described as trying to walk through treacle. The fittest climbers barely manage one step forward every few seconds. Able to crawl at best, Harrod wondered: how could he get down without falling into oblivion off Everest's treacherous North Face? How could he drag himself over the large rocks across the two-kilometre descent route to his high camp that, even for a fit climber, lay some two hours below? And how long would his vital oxygen supplies last?

He felt the wind begin to rise and his [illegible] sink. His despair overcame him. He couldn't see how he was going to get down, and was certain the cold and exhaustion would kill him.

The wind squalls on the mountain were howling and the temperature was plummeting. Madew's eyelashes froze together, blinding him several times. Harrod was lying in the snow and Madew was worried sick about how they could possibly get down to their high tent before dark. He knew that a lot of people in Harrod's situation would simply say to themselves, "I can't do this," and sit down and die.

A supreme optimist by nature, Madew shouted, "I don't know what we're going to do. We're going to have to make it up as we go along. I am not going to be able to carry you because you're too bloody heavy."

Despite his bravado, the Australian

[illegible] saw his years of dreaming and months of preparation to conquer Everest beginning to slip away. In his mind he still held on to the hope he would get another crack at the mountain later, but right now he had to try to save Harrod's life.

Madew reckoned he had no option

Harrod was in grave danger of suffering frostbite, maybe death

if he had been in that situation, he'd want someone to help him.

Meantime, the American gofer, fearing his worsening frostbite, soon left with his guide. He later told the British media that his expedition organisers had ordered him over the radio to go down.

Harrod was able to crawl along the snow on his right side. His only chance of survival would be to get down to [illegible]'s high altitude tent on his knees and [illegible]ches. Harrod and Madew were tense and tired but Madew knew they had to start getting down. Harrod was in grave danger of suffering frost[illegible], at risk of dangerously poor blood circulation, exhaustion, losing his broken leg to gangrene, and, the longer he stayed in the open far up on Everest, eventually death.

Madew struggled to replace his and Harrod's oxygen bottles with spares and turned up Harrod's oxygen flow from the normal two litres a minute to four. The extra oxygen would help the crippled man's blood circulation, induce a mild euphoria to numb his pain, increase his strength to crawl and give him a chance of survival.

Both men were equipped with radios capable of contacting Adventure Peaks staff at the company's Advanced Base Camp far below on the mountain. But they were in a radio shadow, they could transmit intermittently but not receive. Madew got a scrambled message out that Harrod had been seriously hurt but could not be certain that it had been picked up.

Then he told Harrod bluntly there was no way they were going to stay there any longer. To delay their de[illegible] here would mean their options [illegible] were closing off.

Harrod's [illegible] and learned straight away how treacherous his descent was going to be. Several times he slid off the downward path and it took all his strength to wrench himself back to it. He screamed as his broken leg caught on rocks. He worried about how he would cope with the vertical descent on the [illegible] First Step.

They were making such [illegible]

progress edging down towards the top of the First Step – their biggest hurdle – that Madew began to seriously doubt their chances of success. The cold was setting in, and he felt absolutely despondent. Then he saw a figure coming towards them through the swirling snow.

It was Abuhaidar. He had been waiting impatiently in the queue higher up the mountain when his radio crackled with the news from Adventure Peaks staff at base camp that Harrod was badly injured. Madew's frantic call had gone through.

Madew was stunned. He could not believe Abuhaidar would give up making the last push to the summit, seeing how close he was to it. But Abuhaidar told his partners that if he had not come back down, he would have regretted it for the rest of his life.

Madew and Abuhaidar now had to get Harrod down through what would be the most dangerous and painful part of his bid for safety. Harrod would have to abseil down the rock face of the First Step.

It took him several minutes just to summon the courage to drop over the edge of the rock face suspended by ropes. Madew was encouraging him saying that he and Abuhaidar would be just behind him and would soon catch him up. As they talked, Madew removed a climbing glove to attempt to contact base camp on his radio. Suddenly, the wind whipped the thick glove out of his hand and carried it off, leaving him with just its thin inner lining.

Harrod, attached to abseiling ropes but fighting his nerves, finally dropped over the edge. Then what the injured climber feared most happened: halfway down, the crampon on his flailing broken leg tangled in old ropes and he came to a frightening halt, trussed 15 metres above the mountain slope. Abuhaidar had to manoeuvre dangerously down alongside him and untangle his leg. Exhausted, both men edged their way down to the bottom of the rock face.

It had taken two hours to cover a short distance and at that rate they had no chance of getting to the tent at high camp before dark. Unless they sped up, they also risked running out of oxygen. Madew and Abuhaidar tried to speed Harrod down by holding him while the injured man hopped along on his good leg. But the effort quickly exhausted them. Abuhaidar suggested they put a splint on Harrod's shattered leg, using an ice-axe and straps removed from their backpacks to keep his leg straight. It worked. Hitched to safety ropes, Harrod was able to slide down the mountain faster on his haunches with his smashed leg trussed. Madew helped steer him and Abuhaidar acted as a brakeman.

He had run out of oxygen and had no spare bottles left

Slowly, Harrod's mental state improved as he saw his progress quicken down the mountain. He now thought he might survive. Madew could see the change in Harrod's eyes. *He is bloody tough* he thought.

But their problems were still far from over. It was so cold that a bottle of water Madew had been carrying next to his body deep inside his clothing froze solid. Oxygen was running desperately low. Harrod – still needing more than the normal flow – had used up another bottle. Then Abuhaidar's last spare bottle malfunctioned and all the precious oxygen escaped. Madew, who still had some oxygen in his existing bottle, gave his last spare away.

Around 3 p.m., seven hours after the accident – they spotted two Sherpas far below slowly moving up the mountain from a high camp to help. Madew's desperate radio message earlier had sent rescuers into action from below.

For Madew, the sight set off a rush of mixed emotions: delighted relief that help was near but growing anxiety too – about his fading dream, not to mention his own survival. The Sherpas were a long way off and he had run out of oxygen. And he had almost slipped off the mountain again.

After talking with Harrod and Abuhaidar – who encouraged him to leave them and get down to a safer altitude – Madew set out alone for a tent below the one to which Harrod was being taken. Oxygen was stored at that lower camp, and Madew needed it to recover his strength if he was to have any hope of making another attempt on the summit in a few days.

A Sherpa holds the fixed rope tight as the injured Conan Harrod slides and crawls down the steep snow slope en route to the next camp

All the way down he was driven by this thought

The two Sherpas quickly met up with Harrod and Abuhaidar and helped use ropes to steer Harrod's slow slide down the mountain. Half an hour later, around 6 p.m. and some ten gruelling hours after his accident Harrod was huddled in the high camp tent with Abuhaidar beside him to keep him warm. He had travelled two kilometres down the roof of the world on his buttocks and knees, but he was alive. He would stay in the tent overnight and recover some of his strength. The Sherpas went down to an overnight camp that had oxygen and would return in the morning to continue to help Harrod, who still had three days of grinding descent to get to base camp.

Madew, meanwhile, was paying for giving away his oxygen bottles to Harrod. He made it down to a camp at 7800 metres at 8.30 on the night of the accident and stumbled exhausted into a tent. Perhaps the combination of extreme fatigue and biting cold made him unable to think properly: he did not breathe any oxygen from the eight full bottles stored right outside his tent. When he awoke in the morning, his fingers had gone numb. But it wasn't until the sun came up that he could look at them. They were black from frostbite.

Madew was devastated: his attempt

to scale Mount Everest was truly over.

He radioed the expedition organisers at base camp. Although they were busy working on Harrod's rescue, they now became alarmed about Madew. A team of British Royal Navy marines on the mountain was asked to go to his aid.

Two hours later, Madew was sitting despondent in his tent when two marines suddenly poked their heads through the flap and asked, "Hello, what can we do for you today, sir?"

Tears rolled down his face. The marines bandaged Madew's frostbitten fingers, helped him pull on his clothes and boots, clipped him onto guide ropes and took him down to their well-equipped camp below the Everest death zone.

Madew no longer had the use of his hands and over the next day a marine helped him make his way down the rest of the mountain. Using ropes he was lowered down the infamous North Col, a 600-metre vertical ice cliff. When he got to Advanced Base Camp, he phoned his wife, Amanda, in Canberra. He learned that she had followed the rescue of Harrod and himself with information posted on the Internet by other climbers and rescuers on the mountain. She had been beside herself with worry.

Sherpas and marines also helped drag Harrod, wrapped in his sleeping bag on a rope stretcher, down the mountain. Nearly four days after the accident he finally reached base camp at the bottom of Everest on a stretcher carried by Tibetan porters. His broken leg was set in a Kathmandu hospital.

Abuhaidar made it down the mountain by himself when he was satisfied that enough help had arrived to take Harrod down.

In the end, the men who abandoned their Everest dreams to save another man's life resolved never to go back. Peter Madew promised his wife he would not climb any more big mountains. Abuhaidar, disenchanted with the number of people he found on Everest, has found a new passion: sailing.

Only Conan Harrod – who came closest to joining the frozen bodies in Everest's death zone – wants to have another go at the mountain. He plans to start hiking in preparation as soon as his injuries heal.

OLD ADVICE

Young people are not in university to change the world. They are here to learn. There is nothing wrong with developing a heated response to the injustices of our day. But it is only in later, more measured moments that these injustices can be practically addressed.

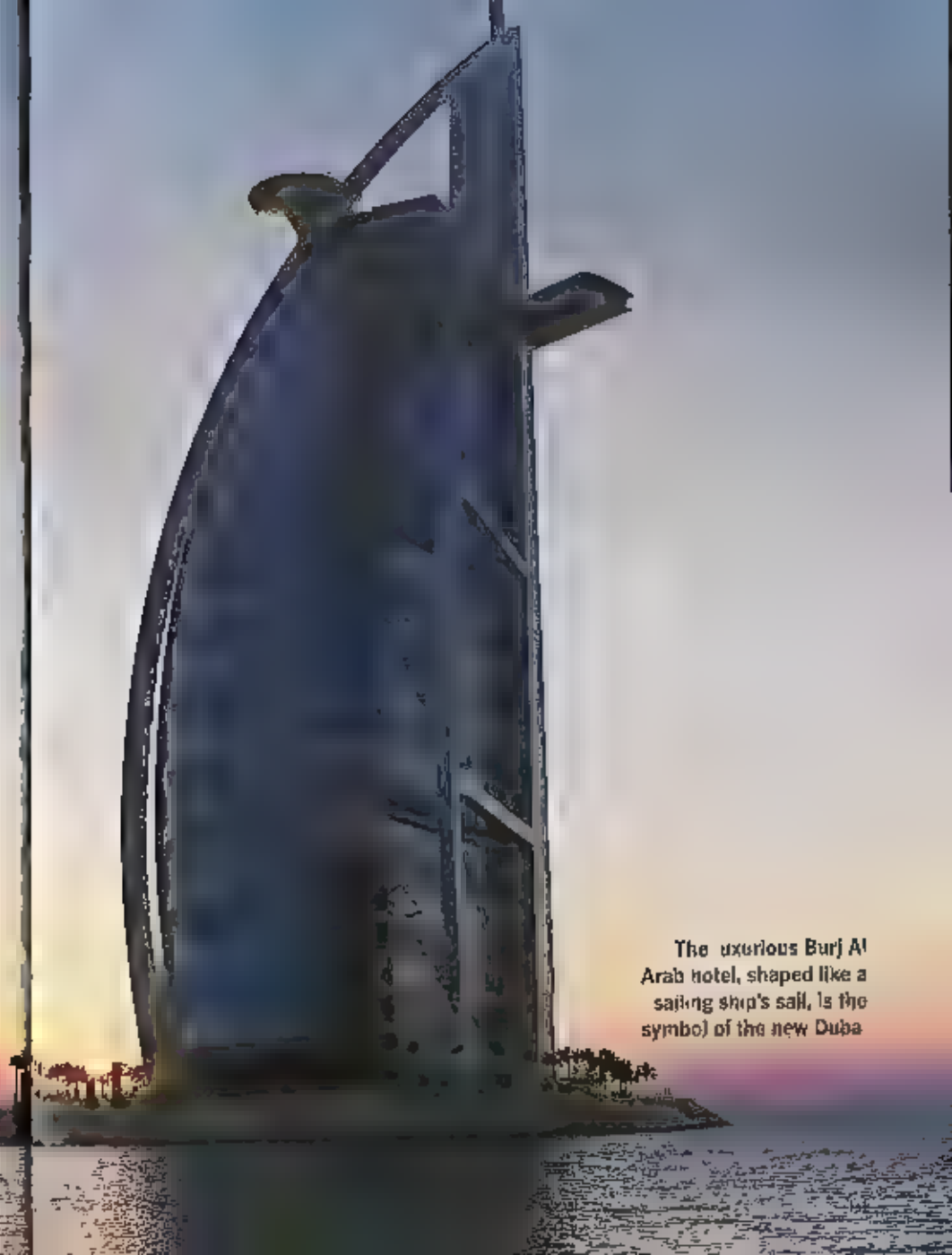
More important than activism is an investment in enduring books, enduring issues, enduring truth. That will equip today's rebels for tomorrow's controversies.

DINESH D'SOUZA in *What's So Great About Christianity*

Dazzling Dubai

BY KEN RINGLE

At the Sheikh Rashid Terminal of Dubai International Airport, a visitor steps onto a carpet patterned after wind ruffled sand, passes goldtone replicas of palm trees and continues past a duty-free store where one can buy a bar of gold or a raffle ticket for a Maserati. A few steps away stands the gate

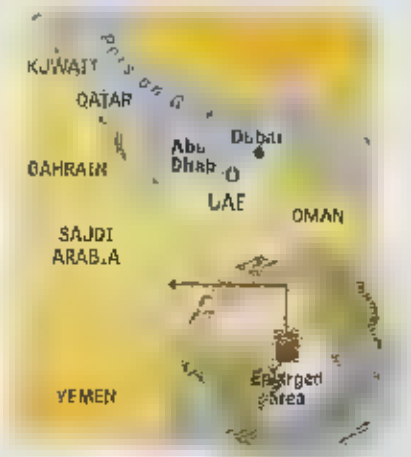


The luxurious Burj Al Arab hotel, shaped like a sailing ship's sail, is the symbol of the new Duba

for Haj pilgrims en route to Mecca. They have their own Starbucks counter.

Beyond the terminal rises a startling skyline: high-rise hotels and office buildings of stainless steel and blue glass springing straight out of the desert. Ten minutes away, in the vast Deira City Centre mall, children lose themselves in video games, and veiled women swathed in billowing black and sporting gold bracelets and diamonds shop in designer boutiques for thong underwear and stiletto-heeled Italian shoes.

Islamic fundamentalists may rage at the West in many parts of the Arab world, but Dubai has embraced Western ways. Once a drowsy haven for gold smugglers and pearl divers, the little emirate today is racing to realise a vision of itself as the Singapore of the Middle East: a high-tech oasis of trade and tourism.



"Dubai is the best unkept secret in the Middle East," says Youssef Ibrahim, a former *New York Times* correspondent and now a consultant in Dubai. "What's been created here is a safe, sophisticated, international city-state with free enterprise and the pleasures of life, located next to the largest reserves of the most vital strategic commodity - oil. It's not only a mecca for world trade; it's the best listening post in the region."

It's also a regional anomaly, an absolute but highly dynamic monarchy that has created an economic powerhouse out of little more than vision, geography and will.

Dubai is one of seven mini-states in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), a loose federation of monarchies stretching 560 kilometres from Saudi Arabia to Oman. The 3885-square-kilometre emirate has neither elections nor a constitution, but its flexible, enlightened legal system incorporates elements of both Islamic and secular law. The emirate is tolerant of infidels, permitting Dubai's hotels to sell liquor. Dubai's women have the same legal and educational rights as men and hold many public sector jobs. Dubai refined its disapproval of the recent invasion of Iraq to providing humanitarian aid to the Iraqi people. "There are no other Dubais in the Arab world," says *New York Times* foreign affairs columnist Thomas Friedman, author of *Longitudes and Attitudes: Exploring the World After September 11*. "But it may provide a cultural and economic template for that world's future."

Unlike sister state Abu Dhabi, with

In 1940, Dubai was a sleepy little port. Now it is a bustling high-tech oasis

86 per cent of the UAE's land and enough oil reserves to last 150 years, Dubai never had large amounts of oil. Its production, which peaked in 1991, provides less than 10 per cent of its income. When the UAE was formed 32 years ago, Sheik Rashid bin Saeed Al Maktoum, the late father of Dubai's present rulers, realised he could not gamble his principality's prospects on oil revenues. The future, he believed, lay in making Dubai the great marketplace of the Middle East; he set out to create tax-free trading zones. Businesses need offices; Sheik Rashid calculated that Dubai's traditional families could profit mightily by developing and renting - but continuing to own - real estate.

"The man could hardly read and write, but he was a genius and a visionary," says a European veteran of those days. "He [told] the workers: 'Cut the red tape and make things move faster.' His lesson is still followed. Government paperwork that takes four days in London takes four hours in Dubai." Its shipyards constitute one of the world's largest container ports.

These days, Crown Prince Sheik Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, 54, the charismatic third son, actively promotes Sheik Rashid's vision. His oldest brother, Sheik Maktoum bin Rashid Al Maktoum, 60, is the ruler of Dubai and vice president of the UAE. His older brother, Sheik Hamdan, 58, deputy ruler, also serves as finance minister of the UAE. But it is Sheik Mohammed who is Dubai's most visible leader. He appears almost daily in the *Gulf News*, attending an regional summit, welcoming Jordan's King Abdullah II (who has described Dubai as an economic model for

his country) or launching some bold, usually quirky, endeavour.

Completing projects I leave to others," he told me when I caught up with him after he had won an 130-kilometre endurance horse race through the desert. "As soon as we start, I'm thinking, *What will be the next?*"

Strolling Dubai is tidy but traffic-clogged city streets or driving its freeways through the desert one can only wonder what the sheikh might dream up. At night the shores of Dubai Creek, a river wide body of water winding through the city, sparkle with festive lights. By day, the two Emirates Towers dominate the urban skyline. Sheik Mohammed, however, says he is prouder of the huge Jebel Ali tax free port and business zone down the coast, of Dubai Internet City, the largest information technology complex in the Middle East, and Dubai Media City, which he wants to be the region's hub for news organisations.

"I've spent a lot of time in Kuwait, but there's little sense of the incredible energy you feel here," Tor Svelland, CEO of a Norwegian software company, told me. "People here only see the possibilities."

This kind of thinking can lead to a mind-reeling brand of over-the-top-ism, best exemplified by the Palm project, a $1.5 billion effort to construct a sand island in the shape of a date palm. When finished in 2005, the trunk will stretch five kilometres, and some of the 17 frond-shaped peninsulas will jut out more than a kilometre into the gulf. The complex will sprout 2500 villas, up to 2400 apartments, 49 hotels and a water park. Its developers boast it will be visible from the moon. And there's a second Palm project already under way nearby.

From earth, the best place to watch the Palm emerging is a restaurant atop the nearby Burj Al Arab hotel, 54 stories of architectural swagger designed to look like a racing sloop sailing under full spinnaker. Accommodation includes a $7500-a-night royal suite. The 1200-member staff includes 20 chauffeurs for the hotel's ten Rolls Royces.

With construction barrelling along, the demand for labour has attracted foreign workers – Filipinos, Indians, Pakistanis and people from throughout the Middle East – who make up 80 per cent of Dubai's one million population. The number and diversity of the foreign workers offer proof of the society's success. "All religions are countenanced, and even though Islam exerts a powerful influence in Dubai, it's an extralegal role," says Mary Jane Deeb, a professor and Arab world specialist in Washington.

Fountains of concrete Dubai remains a desert locale. Despite several desalination plants, water remains a precious commodity (30 cents a litre for drinking water, compared with 24 cents for petrol). Even so, Dubaians make heroic efforts to maintain fountains, lawns and flowers.

Researchers in Dubai are testing salt-tolerant plant varieties in a $3-million

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Crown Prince Sheik Mohammed (eft) is Dubai's most visible eader

a-year research effort. "There is a huge d fference in what it takes to make salt water drinkable, compared to just pure enough to grow crops," said Saeed Al Mussallam, manager of a residentia development on the outskirts. "Today you see desert. In a few years it will be olive trees and orchards."

It would be easier to regard such claims with scepticism were Dubai's other transformations less dramatic.

One morning, I drove into the desert with a guide, Yousif Assad, bound for a resort 45 minutes southeast of the city. Assad, the son of a camel breeder, leads tourist excursions into the desert. He says he appreciates what the government has made possible, which includes grants of money and housing for newlyweds as well as excellent schools and a booming economy. When he injured his leg playing for one of Dubai's official soccer teams, the government sent him to Germany for seven months of surgery and rehabilitation.

I recalled a scene from *Lawrence of Arabia* in which Sheik Auda abu Tayi, played by Anthony Quinn, shouts to his cheering followers, "I am a river to my people!" After Sheik Mohammed won the endurance horse race, cheering Emiratis had swarmed around his horse as they did around Quinn's.

Maybe, I thought, Dubai is nothing more than a benevolent Arab tribal monarchy in modern dress. Then I remembered Saif Suttan al Shamsi, a marketing executive I met in Sheik Mohammed's tent. Al Shamsi was dressed in a *dishdasha*, a neck-to-ankle white tunic and white head scarf. As we sat amid pillows and rugs, dining on an exquisitely prepared buffet, Al Shamsi talked about his year in the United States, when a New York winter sent him fleeing to Arizona and a more familiar clime.

"Were you buying horses there?" I asked, thinking of the millions in equine bloodstock just outside the tent.

"My friend, I don't do horses," said Al Shamsi, smiling indulgently. "I love golf. And I love my Harley." ■

JOHN MANANGSANG'S

Vision of Paradise

John Manangsang prepares to release a lesser bird of paradise that he bought from a poacher

as a crow, it alights on a branch. Through binoculars I snatch a vivid close-up of a cheeky lemon eye set in a yellow helmet, a throat and face-mask of iridescent green outlined in velvety black, breast of chestnut, wings of cinnamon and trailing behind, twin sprays of filamentous feathers that blaze with the white-hot yellow of sunshine. It's the most beautiful creature I have ever seen – a lesser bird of paradise.

It darts away. I'm lucky to have seen it. Though all 42 bird of paradise species on the island of New Guinea are officially protected and listed on CITES Appendix II, the convention on the international trade of endangered species, trade in them is ongoing and blatant.

Europe woke up to the threat in the 1920s and banned the import of bird of paradise skins to decorate women's hats. But today in Papua's capital, Jayapura, nine in ten houses have protected birds, either alive in cages or mounted, according to WWF Indonesia. This is also common in other parts of Indonesia, which administers Papua, the western half of New Guinea.

Indonesia is a bird paradise, but hundreds of its 366 protected species are threatened by habitat destruction and illegal activity. "These populations are shrinking fast," reports Benjamin Mambai, WWF director in Papua. Logging is partly to blame, but the biggest threat is illegal poaching and smuggling. Among the smugglers are ill-paid Indonesian troops in Papua, who know a bird dead or alive will fetch five to ten times more in Java or Sumatra. Officers of the tiny force of 57 forest rangers search troop ships preparing to sail and hear birds chirping in every corner but cannot act against armed men.

Worse, says Widodo Ramono, director of biodiversity conservation in the Ministry of Forestry, officials in Papua buy birds of paradise as gifts or bribes for their bosses and visiting dignitaries. "At this rate, the birds are doomed."

Three of New Guinea's birds of paradise (clockwise from right): a raggiana bird of paradise, a magnificent bird of paradise, and an emperor of Germany

Nobody knows better than John Manangsang the callous fate these birds suffer. He has become, in a sense, their family doctor. Son of a hotel cook and evangelist who migrated from Sulawesi, Manangsang saw birds of paradise in the trees along every roadside during his childhood. "Now it's hard to find them even deep in the forest," he says.

A general practitioner, Manangsang has a busy health clinic on the outskirts of Jayapura. Patients travel to consult him from all over the province. Gentle, solemn and fervently Christian, he's a familiar face in local villages. At the wheel of his minibus ambulance, he toots and waves to everyone he sees.

The rapid decline of birds of paradise frightens him. "It's the spirit of Papuan people," he says. "It's the light of our forest and the symbol of our freedom."

The bird is portrayed on an Indo-

nesian bank note, and its name has been adopted by the local university and a newspaper. Chiefs wear its feathers in their headdresses, and it plays an important role in traditional culture. Even Manangsang's clinic is called Tunas Cendrawasih – the hatching bird of paradise.

ONE EVENING in July 1996, Manangsang's world changed. A soldier carrying a wooden box pushed into the line of waiting patients. "My bird is wounded," the soldier said. "Do you want to buy it?"

Crammed into the box was a lesser bird of paradise with a limp wing. When Manangsang saw the fear and pain in its brilliant eye, something in his heart turned over.

After beating the price down to 400,000 rupiah (then about $170), the doctor took the bird into his surgery. "I'm afraid you'll have to wait," he told his patients. "This is an emergency."

The bird's mauve talons dug into Manangsang's fingers, drawing blood. His wife Yvonne prised them loose and taped the bird's jabbing beak closed. Now Manangsang could spread the wing broken by the soldier's bullet. There were no vets to consult, but he saw what he had to do.

Tenderly he sterilised the wound with alcohol and iodine. He padded a bamboo stick with cotton wool, then bandaged it in place as a splint. But when he used a syringe to feed the bird an antibiotic solution, it struggled fiercely.

A boy sent out to catch grasshoppers came back with a handful. The doctor injected the drug into a grasshopper and fed it to the bird. Next day, he released the bird into a one-metre cage hastily built on his veranda. His four children called it Happy.

Two weeks later a different soldier brought another bird for sale. Its feathers bloodied from a bullet. Manangsang bought it, administered anaesthetic and stitched its wounds. Now Happy had a friend. Vitamins mixed into bananas and papayas helped the birds fight infection and recover from stress.

The three-storey aviary that Manangsang built in the courtyard of his clinic

Soon, soldiers and police brought more and more birds. Manangsang built a three-storey aviary in his clinic's courtyard. Even this huge cage, its trees hung with fruit for the birds, filled up with heartbreaking speed – proof that the killing and capture of protected birds was happening on a massive scale.

One day Manangsang was handed a plastic shopping bag. Huddled inside was a flame bowerbird. With orange head, yellow back and brown trimmings, it was beautiful. Then came a twelve-wired bird of paradise. Iridescent purple-black and sulphur-yellow with thin plums like long wires pointing forwards from its tail, the bird seemed to be sitting in an indoor television aerial.

Another was a magnificent riflebird, velvety black with an emerald breastplate, and then a buff-tailed sicklebill, not very handsome but with the most jacket and long-necked look of the Muppet.

Quickly Manangsang learned to stitch a bird's wounds without damaging its feathers. At first, his bird patients suffered injuries mainly from hunters' arrows. Some were caught in glue smeared on trees. As many as five trapped on one branch could die of injuries inflicted by their frantic struggles.

Then the character of the injuries changed, and Manangsang realised the hunters were now using nets strung between branches near the leks, where colourful males compete for the attention of females. More females turned up, caught while visiting the leks to mate.

Soon, Manangsang's patients gave him a new name – Doctor Cendrawasih. But not everybody in Papua was happy with his activities.

THOUGH LAWS against possession of protected birds had existed since 1990, not a single case had reached the courts. This changed dramatically one morning in 1998. As Manangsang prepared for the day's stream of patients, the clinic was surrounded by police, and the aviary was sealed off with yellow tape. The doctor was led off and charged with possession of birds of paradise.

First, Manangsang struggled to get the tape removed so the birds could be fed. Next, he fought the police in court, and lost. Undaunted, he appealed to the high court in Jakarta. Though facing up to ten years in jail and a $50,000 fine, he fought his own case. It dragged on for a year, but he won.

Home again, Manangsang, together with 100 university experts, tribal chiefs and local politicians, devised a conservation plan for 30,000 hectares of land around nearby Lake Sentani. Their vision was a paradise for people and birds, with fruit and orchid farms providing a habitat and the economy benefiting from tourists. The plan

was ignored. Instead, the government opened another three million hectares of forest to logging.

"What makes us all so sad and angry," says Manangsang, "is that the government – if it chose to – could save the birds of paradise tomorrow."

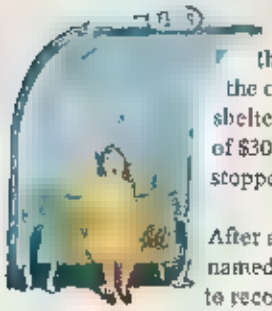
EARLY ONE MORNING last November, an ambulance bumped up a steep track in the foothills of Mount Cyclop, on the outskirts of Jayapura. John Manangsang stopped, lifted out a wooden cage and carried it into the forest. His aviary at home was getting crowded again.

At this secret location he has released more than 120 birds of paradise. Now his cage contained a lesser bird of paradise, sold to him by a student. It was the fifth bird the student had shot to pay his way through university. But after a month in "hospital," it was now in perfect health.

Under the huge trees, Manangsang set the cage down, opened the door and stepped back. The gorgeous bird looked out, hopped to the nearest branch, then to another. Then, like a shooting star, it was suddenly gone.

For more information about birds of paradise and other threatened birds in Asia, visit us online.

BACK TO THE DRAWING BOARD



It seemed like a great idea. In trying to protect the bus riders of Mesa, Arizona, from the elements, the city council approved construction of two city bus shelters. Only after the project was completed at a cost of $30,000 did this fact come to light: Buses no longer stopped at either location. [illegible]

After a number of people left messages for someone named "Anna" on my answering machine, I decided to record a greeting that included my name. It seemed to have solved the problem until one night I came home to, "Hi, Rochelle, can you give this message to Anna?" ROCHELLE FOUNTAIN

OH WELL, THEN IT'S ALL RIGHT

After a long day of shopping, my mother and I stopped at a grocery store. I dashed in to pick up a few things, leaving her in the car. As I approached the checkout, I was shocked to see my mother there waiting for me. "Mum," I said, "what are you doing in here? I left the motor running."

"It's all right," she replied. "I locked the doors." [illegible] TERPSTRA

AS KIDS SEE IT

WHEN my six-year-old grandson heard that my cat had died, he asked where the cat was now. I told him it was buried in the garden. As the son of two avid gardeners, he then asked, "Will another one grow?" P. BAKER

MY TEN-YEAR-OLD SON phoned me at work to ask me to take him to a store when I got home.

"Which store?" I asked.

"Any store."

"What do you want to buy?"

"It's a surprise," he told me.

It took a few more questions before he explained that his fortune cookie the night before predicted, "There will be a surprise in store for you." PAIGE REEVERS-GOWLER

THE BOARD of education in a nearby town sold off a building that had been a one-room schoolhouse. The buyer converted it to a bar. One day an elderly man was walking by the place with his grandson and pointed to the building. "That's where I went to school," he said.

"Really?" said the boy. "Who was your bartender back then?" [illegible]

RICKY was ten when my husband and I were expecting our fifth child. We called a family conference, and encouraged the kids to voice their opinions about the addition. Our daughter hoped for a sister, while two of the boys wished for another sparring partner. Ricky, though, had one concern: "Now how are we going to share a dozen doughnuts?" KATHY [illegible]

MY EIGHT-YEAR-OLD SON declared that he wanted to be a minister just like his dad. "But," Nathan noted, with one difference."

"What's that?" I asked.

"My sermons," he said, "will make more sense." GORDON [illegible]

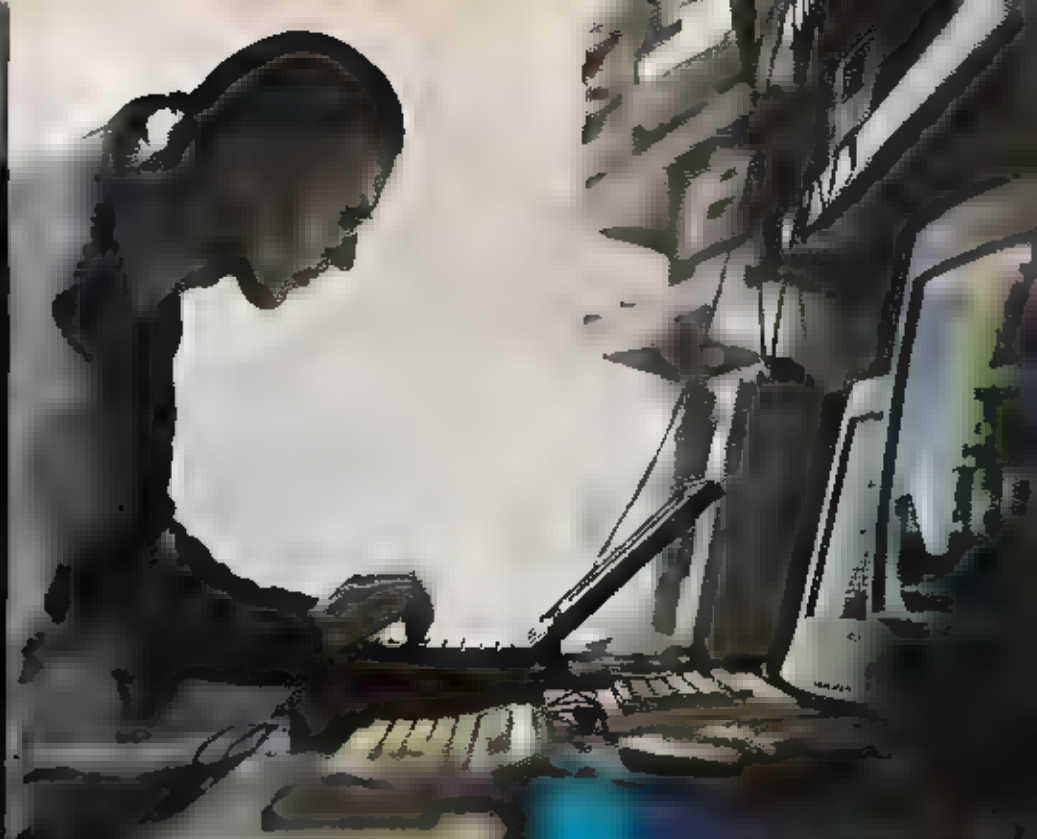
$ Got a funny story to share? It may be worth $100. See page 1.

"I did my homework, but the dog pressed control-alt-delete"

When a powerful virus threatened computers around the world, the race was on to block it

The Code Warrior

BY MICHAEL SHNAYERSON



Mikko Hyppönen led the battle to stop the Sobig.F computer virus

In Edgar Allen Poe's classic story "The Masque of the Red Death," an uninvited guest slips into a costume ball, his mask in place, and mingles with the crowd until the clock strikes midnight. Only then do the horrified onlookers realise he's infected them with a deadly plague.

So, on August 18, 2003, did a masked guest enter an Internet newsgroup to infect his cyber-companions with the widest-spreading and most costly e-mail virus of all time.

Using a stolen credit-card number, a guest opened an Easynews account and entered a newsgroup dedicated to pornography. Seven minutes later he posted a message to the newsgroup's patrons. Many of the guests clicked open an attachment ostensibly containing pornographic images, only to be infected. And so began Sobig.F, a virus that sent unsolicited e-mails hundreds of millions in all around the world.

The e-mail flood disrupted businesses from Starbucks and Federal Express to AOL Time Warner. But that was just the start. Encrypted in the virus's code was a second stage timed to launch later that week. Every computer infected with Sobig.F would download a mysterious program from an unknown website. Would the program wipe out the data on the owners' hard drives? Steal their passwords or credit card numbers?

With the fateful hour looming, virus hunters around the world vied with one another to crack the encryption, both to avert what could be a global computer calamity and to earn the glory of stopping the most complex virus yet. Some were at Microsoft in Washington State, others at Computer Associates in Long Island, New York, Symantec and Network Associates in California, and still others at Britain's Sophos and Tokyo's Trend Micro. These were the industry leaders. Yet all knew they had a colleague to reckon with: Mikko Hyppönen, a 34 year-old Finn with a long ponytail, who worked at a small Helsinki-based company called F-Secure.

In an office in an industrial area at the western end of Helsinki, Hyppönen bent over his laptop and scrolled through 2000 pages of Sobig.F virus code, calling out orders to a crack anti-virus team of young Europeans down the hall. Beside him, a forgotten cup of black coffee grew cold. Outside, unnoticed, a precious Nordic summer day rose, shimmered and began to fade.

Throughout the year, a strange series of viruses had hit the Internet, the first one only moderately threatening, the following ones more complex and cunning. It started on January 9, when Hyppönen and his team became the first to debug an infected e-mail sent from the fictitious address big@boss.com. A standard e-mail virus, Sobig, as the virus hunters named it, came in an attachment that had to be clicked on for a computer to become infected with it. Sobig then sent itself to every e-mail address in a user's computer. But, as Hyppönen and his industry colleagues soon saw, the virus had a second stage: every infected computer was scheduled to download files from a single website at a later time.

To stop this first Sobig, the virus hunters had only to warn Internet service providers (ISPs) like America OnLine to block e-mails from big@boss.com, and then persuade a website host called GeoCities to shut down the page from which the second stage would be launched.

Sobig was an attachment that had to be clicked on to become infectious. It then sent itself to every e-mail address in the user's computer

Somewhere, the virus writers were watching what the virus hunters did.

On May 19, a new Sobig hit the Internet – Sobig.B, to follow the renamed Sobig.A. The variant purported to be from "Microsoft Support", it came with an attachment, and users were instructed "All information is in the attached file."

"Microsoft Support never sends files with attachments," Hyppönen observes. But hundreds of thousands of users, especially in the US and Britain, were duped. Strangely, Sobig.B was coded to terminate in two weeks, as if the writers viewed it as a dry run. The day after its demise came the new and improved Sobig.C, and then, two weeks later, Sobig.D.

With each iteration the game grew nastier. The writers were figuring out how to send e-mails from many addresses, not just one, and how to give them various subject headings. Now service providers had a much harder time blocking them. When the virus got through, it downloaded "keyboard sniffers," which reacted to words typed on a keyboard, such as "password," "bank," "account access," and "credit card," and copied the words or numbers that immediately followed them. The virus installed "backdoor" programs too. With them, the virus writer could enter the computer and fish out the passwords, credit card numbers and other files and documents.

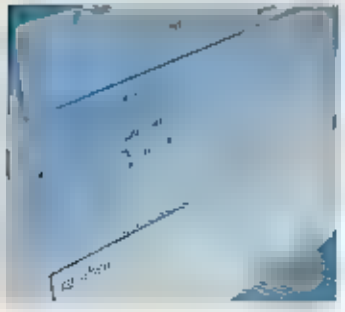
When Sobig.E expired on July 14 without a follow-on the next week, Hyppönen allowed himself to think he'd seen the last of the virus. But now here was Sobig.F.

Hyppönen posted a virus alert to

F-Secure's anti-virus subscribers, then his team started combing the replication code for a few bits that were both unique and essential to the virus that would help a computer identify and kill it. Hyppönen posted his team's search tool for Sobig.F in two hours and 33 minutes.

Virus hunters from New York to Tokyo were posting search tools and anti-virus updates as well, and for anyone who downloaded one, Sobig.F was no longer a threat. But that still left most of the world exposed.

After watching the e-mails mount, Hyppönen upgraded Sobig.F to a Level One threat at 4.55 p.m. Tuesday. But he still knew only a fraction of what the virus could do. Late that evening,



At 4.55 p.m. Tuesday, Hyppönen upgraded Sobig.F to a Level One threat. But he still knew only a fraction of what the virus could do

soon after greeting his wife and putting his children to bed, he was back at the laptop, scrolling through code.

The next day – Wednesday, August 20 – the virus rampaged through cyberspace like a tsunami. Companies around the world staggered under the e-mail load; many systems crashed for hours at a time. Yet home users were more affected. "It was relatively easy for corporations to block it with filters," says Vincent Weafer, a senior director of Symantec Security Response. "Home users got so many of these messages, with different subject headings, that they were apt to click on one of them."

Hundreds of thousands of computers might now be vulnerable to the second stage of the virus. By Thursday morning, Hyppönen had learned that all infected computers were to start downloading a program of some kind at 10 p.m. Friday, Finnish time. But what program? From where? And how?

The key lay in a short stretch of the virus heavily encrypted with algorithms, like a secret wartime code. "In most cases, we can crack the algorithms in a few minutes," explains Gergely Erdélyi, a 25-year-old Hungarian team member who took on the task. But these algorithms were multi-layered – designed to confront the world's 200 or so virus hunters until the second stage launched. At about 2 p.m. Thursday, Erdélyi succeeded.

What lay revealed was a list of 20 computers in the US, Canada and South Korea, all continuously connected to the Internet by cable

modems. On Friday, every computer in the world infected with Sobig.F would start trying to contact one of the 20 servers. Twenty were needed for the sheer volume of traffic the infected computers would cause. When contact was made, the servers would direct the infected computers to a website from which they'd download a program.

So the hunters had no choice but to shut down the 20 servers. Chances were the servers belonged to home users who had no idea what was going on; their computers had been infected with earlier versions of Sobig and the virus writers were manipulating them through the clandestine back doors they'd installed. The home users would surely turn off their cable connections if asked. But how to contact them? There was no point in calling the Internet-service providers. "We had done it before, and it was a waste of time," Hyppönen says with a sigh. "They're not going to disconnect a paying customer just because some company in Finland asks them."

Grimly, Hyppönen put in a call to Finland's Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT), a government-sponsored group.

By early Friday afternoon, the CERT had helped get 11 of the 20 machines closed down. But the balance were in the US and Canada, beyond CERT's reach. That was when Hyppönen called the FBI. He was able to report that in the interim five more machines had gone down. But that left four still on, with the deadline less than four hours away.

At 7.28, Microsoft joined the search. The hunters were down to three servers. With the FBI's help, another was brought down. The remaining two were in the US. One of those had been turned off. Unfortunately, the twentieth server was still online.

Would one be enough? At precisely 10 p.m., hundreds of thousands of infected computers began trying to connect to the one last operating server. To the hunters' relief, they swamped it completely. So the hunters would never know what the writers planned to download that night.

One of the great appeals of virus writing is that almost no-one gets caught. As the number of computers infected by Sobig.F declined, the FBI's Los Angeles field office tracked the first infected e-mails to Easynews, in Phoenix. Easynews co-owner Michael Minor found a record of the credit-card transaction used to open the virus writers' account, but the number turned out to be stolen. He also found the numerical address of the computer from which the purchase had been made. The computer was in Vancouver, British Columbia. "To the best of my knowledge, it was at somebody's home," Minor told reporters. Minor suspects all the agents found was a wide-eyed Canadian whose computer the virus writers had commandeered through a back door installed by an earlier Sobig.

Hyppönen feels sure he knows the motive behind Sobig.F: not malice, just money. "I think it's organised crimi-

nal gangs," he says. Along with identity theft credit card numbers sold on the black market he suspects they've made huge profits from creating "proxies" (or commandeered computers) for spammers.

Aware of the danger done by the most destructive virus ever Microsoft has announced a $250,000 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of Sobig's creators. The reward is part of the company's new, $5 million bounty programme to help nab virus writers It's an indication of how serious a threat they are to Microsoft.

At the wheel of his Volvo, with punk music playing on the stereo, Hyppönen drives a visitor to a favourite restaurant in Helsinki, where the dish of the house is reindeer steak. The nightmare of August is over

An American virus hunter might wonder, perhaps, if he is getting paid enough money for shooting down virus after virus, and burnishing the company name

"Money?" Hyppönen echoes wonderingly. The word seems almost alien to him. "Money would be nice. But it's the work that's so interesting. And obviously there's pressure when there's a big outbreak going on. No one is really at your neck, but you know that people in the company are relying on you." He flashes a boyish grin as he cuts his reindeer steak "Who's going to buy the anti-virus program if we can't stop the viruses?"

COMMA-TOSE

The comma can cause all sorts of mischief if misused. Some additional punctuation in the following items might have kept one police officer from receiving odd stares, alerted readers to be on the lookout for a heavyset rather than a hirsute, man, and cued one woman into her family's plans:

Get tips on how to keep yourself safe from Trooper First Class Ronald Yanica of the Maryland State Police.

Authorities said the robber is a 6 foot tall, white male with a beard weighing approximately 220 pounds. Frederick News-Post submitted by E. YARD, P. CE

My husband asked me to read an essay he wrote for a university class, detailing his goals following retirement A though quite good, one sentence did leap out at me: "After retiring my wife, the kids and I plan to . . ."

REG. VA. ONTE S

Battle against cancer gains ground in Singapore

Singapore MEDICINE

With leading edge medical technology and expertise, Singapore establishes herself firmly as the region's medical hub. Patients from across the region's can now head to this beautiful and green city for medical treatments instead of flying to the UK and America. This six-part series showcases bold new moves by the medical industry to provide world class medical facilities and treatment in Singapore.

The battle against cancer is gaining ground. The small island of Singapore is on the world map for being one of the few cancer centres to have among its arsenal a revolutionary cancer diagnostic tool that accurately pinpoints the presence of the disease

This comes as a relief to patients in the region who previously had to travel to places like Australia and US for these diagnostic tools despite their medical condition Since last July, patients have had the option of going to Singapore's Mount Elizabeth Hospital, AsiaMedic or Singapore General Hospital instead

Says Dr Shahid Mahmood, Clinical Director of the Nuclear Medicine Section at Mount Elizabeth Hospital, "Today we have very sophisticated modalities at our disposal One example of such imaging technology which produces high quality images and has made a great impact on our lives, is Positron Emission Tomography or PET. PET is a unique imaging technique, which can help to diagnose diseases or conditions, otherwise difficult or impossible to detect."

He adds that PET scans, which can produce three-dimensional images of different parts of the body, have

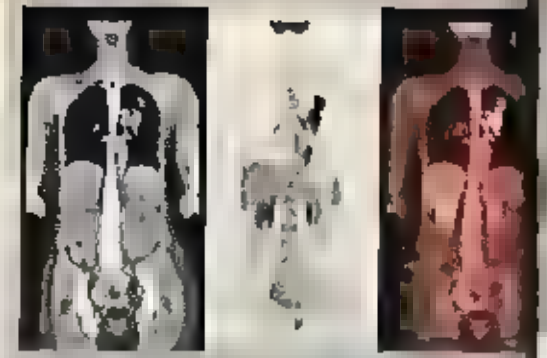
become an integral part in the management of lung and colorectal cancers, lymphomas, melanomas, liver and, more recently, breast cancers. These scans are useful not only in the initial diagnosis of cancer, but also in monitoring the effectiveness of treatment. In addition to the detection of cancer, PET scans are also used extensively in diagnosing coronary artery disease and brain disease.

A PET scan shows the functioning of the body's organs at the cell level. This allows the doctor to see the subtlest alterations in biochemical processes that suggest cancerous growth, well before changes are apparent on other imaging tests such as the X-ray. A PET scan can pick up the presence of a cancerous growth, which would not have been apparent on an X-ray film.

But this does not mean that conventional imaging tests are redundant. It only means doctors have a wider range of diagnostic tools and a surer basis to treat a cancer patient. Doctors can also assess with greater confidence whether or not a treatment, or a combination of treatments, has been effective. This may eliminate the need for expensive or painful surgeries that do not help the patient. The patient has a better chance of recovery and may even save thousands of dollars in the process.

The scanner that is now available in Singapore is called the PET/CT (Positron Emission Tomography Computer Tomography) scanner, which can spot tumours as small as a full stop. And best of all, it can differentiate between malignant and benign growths and even determine the extent of growth. The accuracy rate is estimated to be 98 per cent, compared to 60 per cent for a CT scan alone.

This is how the PET/CT scanner works. A patient is injected with glucose, which is made radioactive using a heavy lead-clad machine called a cyclotron. The PET scanner picks up the subatomic particles emitted by the radioactive substance and displays an image showing varying brightness in a process that takes 30 to 45 minutes.



How Does PET Work?
A specialised radioactive form of glucose, Fluro Deoxy Glucose (FDG), is injected into the patient's vein. Cells in the body take up this molecule, which emits a charge called a positron. This positron interacts with an adjacent electron and produces two energy particles that are transmitted out of the body. These are detected and measured by the PET scanner. Areas with increased FDG uptake will emit more positrons and photons, and this will show up as darker areas on the PET image.
– source: AsiaMedic, Singapore

Singapore pioneered the concept of "medical tourism" in Asia. Last year, it received more than 200,000 foreign patients, many of them from Australia. Here's why Singapore is so attractive.

A Series Brought To You By Singapore Medicine

Cancerous tissues, which use more glucose than normal tissue, will appear much brighter than normal ones. The PET image is then superimposed on a CT image, which is a detailed map of the body, to allow doctors to pinpoint the cancerous growth. The exposure to radioactivity is low and short-term so it does not affect the normal processes of the body.

The PET/CT scanner has won rave reviews among the leading cancer centres around the world. New York's Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, which started using it in early 2002, has found that the scans are so precise that they detect cancers that would not have been spotted any other way.

Each S$4 million scanner can diagnose up to 12 patients a day. In Singapore, the two hospitals and one medical centre with PET/CT scanners share a S$5 million cyclotron, which is indispensable because isotopes cannot be imported as they are radioactive and decay quickly. This joint acquisition of the cyclotron is a fine example of public and private sector cooperation to take advantage of economies of scale. One cyclotron is sufficient to supply isotopes to every hospital in Singapore if they all eventually decide to have a PET/CT scanner.

A PET/CT scan carried out in Singapore costs patients between S$3,000 and S$4,000, similar to what is charged in Australia and the United States.

The answer to better cancer detection has arrived in Southeast Asia.

"I would recommend Singapore any day, because they have good hospitals and a good healthcare system here."
Mr Abdallah Al Al Be ooshi, from United Arab Emirates, had brought his mother to Singapore for her cancer treatment.

Singapore MEDICINE

International Patient Centre

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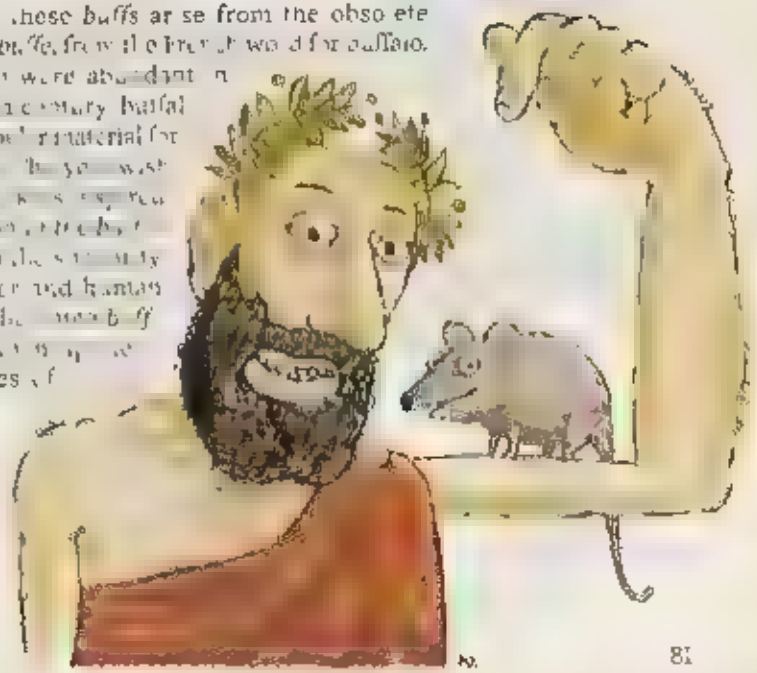
at all the places you need.

There's a Mouse in Your Muscle

How animals taught us how to talk

BY MARTHA BARNETTE

WE MAY BUFF A WAXED FLOOR, call someone in great shape buff, even ask politicians if they sleep in the buff. Strangely alike, these buffs arise from the obsolete English word buffe, from the French word for buffalo. When buffalo were abundant in late-nineteenth-century buffalo [illegible] was a popular material for [illegible] the expression, [illegible] to the [illegible] and humans [illegible] the word buff. Leather was [illegible] to other types of soft leather used for



po. shing metal to a high gloss – inspiring the verb *to buff* and our more modern adjective *buff*. But that's not all. New York firefighters once wore buffalo-skin coats. Amateur firefighters tagged along on calls, emulating the pros right down to their buff-coloured coats. The volunteers came to be known as *buffs*, which came to include other kinds of enthusiasts too.

Animals lurk everywhere in our language, if we know where to look. There are the obvious examples: a brief snooze is a catnap, dog-eared describes the turned-down pages of a book. But other animals lie hidden in words we use every day.

Bombastic. Do you think this word means loud, booming or otherwise bomb-like? Wrong! Strictly speaking, bombastic means empty, inflated and insubstantial – because its origins are curled up inside *bombyx*, the ancient Greek word for silk worm, the moth larva that spins a silken cocoon used in making the soft, silky cloth.

From this arose an Old French word *bombace*, meaning another type of soft cotton padding. English speakers altered it to *bombast*, for the soft down of the cotton plant – which soon proved to be a handy synonym for overly padded, pretentious speech.

Chubby. The European chub is a dusky green, white-bellied river fish notable for its obese appearance. Since at least the seventeenth century, English speakers have used the adjective *chubby* for someone who is similarly plump. Hence also the handy adjectives *chub-cheeked* and *chub-faced*.

Delphinium. A "little dolphin" peeks out of this flower's name. The ancient Greeks thought the nectar-producing part of the flower resembled a dolphin's nose, so they called it *delphinion*, the diminutive form of *delphis*, their name for the marine mammal. Its Latinised form, *delphinium*, now acts as the

flower's scientific name (its other name is larkspur).

Hands down. This expression, meaning unconditionally or easily, as in "He won the contest hands down," comes from the world of horse racing. A hands-down victory occurs when a jockey's win is so assured that he drops his hands and relaxes his grip on the reins when nearing the finish line.

Kibitz. There's a little bird hopping around inside this handy Yiddishism, which means to look on, offer meddlesome advice or make wisecracks. Kibitz derives from the German verb *kiebitzen*, which means to look on, especially in an annoying way, while others are playing cards. The word for this activity came from the German word *Kiebitz*, the name of a little bird with a reputation for being noisily imitative.

Muscle. Clench your fist to make your biceps pop, and you'll see why we call it a muscle. The ancient Romans referred to a muscle as a *musculus*, literally, a little mouse, maybe because of the way a twitching muscle under the skin resembles a mouse under a blanket. Borrowing this idea, English speakers used the word *mouse* as a synonym for muscle.

Oolong. The strong, dark tea that is grown in China has a beastly name. It derives from the Chinese term *wulong*, literally, black dragon.

Queue. Heard mostly in the United Kingdom, the British Commonwealth and former British colonies, the word *queue*, which means a line of people, stands at the end of an etymological queue stretching from the Latin word *cauda*, or tail. English speakers borrowed *queue* from the French, where it also means tail. A variation on this word is our name for the long, tapering stick used in the game of pool or billiards – the *cue*.

Ralph. This is one of several masculine names in English that have a wolf prowling around inside them. Along with its variants Rafe, Raoul and Raul, Ralph arose from the Germanic name *Radulf* – a combination of *rad*, meaning counsel, and *wulf*, the name for the lupine animal.

Sommelier. This restaurant employee oversees the wine cellar and knows which ones best complement which foods. The title's origin, however, isn't nearly so elegant. The Old French word *sommelier* means an officer in charge of provisions and, more specifically, a pack-animal driver. *Sommelier* comes from an older word, *sommier*, meaning a beast of burden.

Taupe. The name of this popular pantyhose colour comes directly from the French, in which *taupe* denotes that burrowing brown creature, the mole. The French word is from the Latin name for the animal, *talpa*. That in turn, burrowed inside the Italian word for mouse or rat, *topo*.

Wombat. The name for this stocky, burrowing marsupial derives from a similar sounding word in an indigenous language of Australia. But you may see much more of this word in the form of a useful acronym that has worked its way around the Internet; WOMBAT stands for "waste of money, brains and time," as in "These marathon meetings are always such a WOMBAT!"

LIFE IN THE PAST LANE

While visiting her grandparents, my eight-year-old niece, Maria pleaded for a diary. They finally gave her one and she spent that afternoon happily writing. After each entry, though, she'd run to Grandpa to read him what she'd written.

Several recitations later, he said, "You know, Maria, a diary is for your private thoughts. You shouldn't be reading them to me."

"I can tell you my secrets, Grandpa," she said confidently, "because you won't remember them."

[illegible]

I am short and stocky with grey hair and a beard. My dog was also short and stocky and had grey hair. On one of our walks, three boys cycled past and I heard one of them say, "That's a strange one."

The second boy agreed, exclaiming, "Yes, it's all grey and fluffy."

The third cyclist said, "So's the dog."

[illegible]

My uncle announced that he was now an OAP (old age pensioner). His wife had another meaning: "Often at the pub."

[illegible]

My six-year-old daughter was travelling in the car with my parents as they passed a cyclist struggling up a hill. "Looks like he's in the wrong gear," my dad said.

"Oh, Grandad," sighed my daughter. "That's what all young people wear these days."

[illegible]

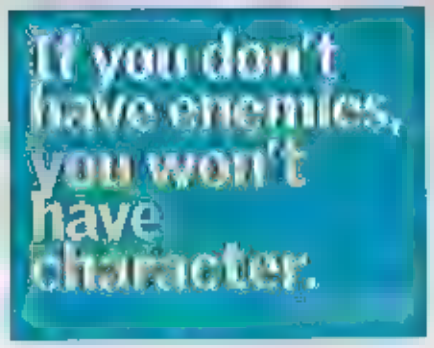
QUOTABLE QUOTES

When they said to you at graduation, "Follow your dream," did anybody say you have to wake up first?

[illegible]

I haven't taught people in 50 years what my father taught by example in one week.

[illegible]



Take integrity over popularity and you'll always be cool.

[illegible]

In California virtually everyone has had their teeth whitened. If they all smiled at once, they would give us a [illegible]

According to the latest issue of *Modern Bride* magazine, the average bride spends 150 hours planning her wedding. The average groom spends 150 hours going, "Yeah, sounds good."

JAY LENO

Life is not worth living unless there's a camera around.

a) Carmen Electra
b) Lucy Liu
c) Jessica Simpson
d) Arnold Schwarzenegger

FOR ANSWER SEE BELOW

When my generation was your age, we took crazy risks. The wildest thing was – prepare to be shocked – we deliberately ingested carbohydrates.

[illegible]

Karaoke is the great equaliser.

[illegible]

a) Carmen Electra

You don't have to be flabby and sluggish the rest of your life

IT'S NEVER TOO LATE TO Get Fit

BY LAM LYE CHING

Dru Manahan of Maula glanced at a photograph of herself one day and was shocked at how much weight she had put on. "My arms were enormous and my chest looked larger than it ever had been," she recalls. "I looked like a pregnant woman."

Manahan couldn't ignore reality when it was facing her straight on. She was almost 40, and her body was turning to flab.

It wasn't hard to figure out why. After working as the director of a preschool all day, all she wanted to do was go home and relax. Exercise was the last thing on her mind.

But Manahan paid a high price. In addition to putting on weight, she felt lethargic and stiff much of the time. After some reflection, she realised that by skimping on exercise, she was shortchanging herself of vitality and good health things she wanted to enjoy well into old age. It was time to get moving.

Inactive people are 40 per cent

more likely to die younger. Those who do exercise lower their risk of heart disease, arthritis, diabetes, high blood pressure, colon cancer, osteoporosis and stroke, says Dr Dewi Ramasamy, consultant cardiologist at Gleneagles Intan Medical Centre in Kuala Lumpur. A 2001 study published in the *Archives of Internal Medicine* concluded that regular exercise can protect against cognitive decline and dementia.

"It is best to start as early as possible because the older you get, the harder it is to establish good exercise habits," advises Hadi Riyanto, technical director of the Singapore Fitness Professionals Federation.

"It's best to start exercising as early as possible"

Dr Deana Santos-Ringor, medical director of the P. Ilusorio Centre for Geriatric Care in Manila, admits that with each passing decade, it's tougher to keep the kilos off and muscles toned. "It's vitally important," she says. Despite the benefits, too many of us aren't getting enough exercise. What's your excuse?

1. "I don't have time."

This is the most frequently cited barrier to exercise. But as Loh Mee Lian of YWCA Singapore points out, active people have just as much – or as little – time as anyone else. "It's how you organise your time," she says. "Instead of watching television, you can spend that time exercising." Experts in Asia recommend 35-40 minutes of exercise a day. If that's more than you can spare, you can break the exercise into ten-minute segments and still get the benefits, says Dr Santos-Ringor.

We are often overwhelmed by the demands of work, school and family. "More and more people are not spending enough time on exercise," says Dr Ramasamy. "Many of the people I see are so unfit that they can't even climb a few flights of stairs."

Eufracio C. Tolentino of Manila went on regular brisk walks and lifted weights when he was young, but by his 30s, he had a family and a busy job as a real estate agent. He neglected exercise for years. At the age of 59 he had a stroke, leaving his right side partially paralysed. He realised that if he was going to have any chance of resuming his old life, he needed to start exercising.

Tolentino now visits a rehabilitation centre in the morning and spends his afternoons power walking at a stadium near his house, riding a stationary bicycle and lifting dumbbells. "After I'd been working out a while, I became less lethargic and there was an improvement in my blood pressure and cholesterol levels," Tolentino says. He also recovered from the depression he fell into after his stroke.

People ask if he has lost weight

(only a bit, about four kilos) and comment on his alertness and lighter step. But most important to Tolentino, now 60, is that he feels better. "I encourage my friends to start exercising. If they don't, they may also suffer from a stroke."

2. "I'm not overweight."

Think you're healthy just because you're within your ideal weight range for your height? Think again. You need to work towards achieving your target heart rate while exercising. Count your pulse beats for ten seconds after 20 minutes of aerobic activity and multiply by six. If your heart is healthy, the number you get should be between 50 and 75 per cent of your maximum heart rate (generally calculated as 220 minus your age).

Raymond Chiew, a Kuala Lumpur-based branch vice chairman of the Malaysian Chinese Association, figured he got enough exercise playing golf once a week. The 57-year-old wasn't overweight and didn't smoke or drink. Then he had the scare of a lifetime. After he woke up one early morning with chest pains, tests revealed that two of the arteries in his heart were seriously blocked. Chiew had bypass surgery and his cardiologist told him to exercise more.

"I was stunned. I had no idea I was unfit," says Chiew, who now jogs for an hour every day. "My doctor says that my heart is functioning normally and the arteries are in good shape."

3. "I tried exercising and never lost weight."

Middle age brings many things – including a slower metabolism that makes it easy to pack on the kilos. Many people start exercising because they want to lose weight, and when that doesn't happen immediately, they may give up. But the same volume of muscle weighs more than fat, so a large person who is fit could be healthier than a slim person who is not.

"Fat can be eliminated while gaining muscle bulk," explains Dr Santos-Ringor. Increasing your muscle-to-fat ratio revs up your metabolism.

Abdominal muscles are especially important. A study published in the May 2002 issue of *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise* states that people with weak stomach muscles die earlier. After tracking 8116 men and women aged 20 to 69 for 13 years, researchers determined that people with low levels of abdominal strength were significantly more likely to have died than others.

Without regular physical activity, [illegible] person's muscle mass can decrease by nearly 50 per cent between the ages of 20 and 90. No wonder some elderly people are so weak and frail. Weight-bearing exercise makes bones stronger and can prevent or slow osteoporosis.

When V.M. Chandran, the director of a Kuala Lumpur engineering company, saw his weight surge past 90 kilos in his late 40s, he knew that he had to do something. He suffered from stress,

diabetes and high blood pressure. His cardiologist advised him to slim down. Chandran had been an accomplished athlete at secondary school and had continued to exercise regularly well into his 30s, so he decided to start again.

He began taking walks on a treadmill for 45 minutes a day. His high blood pressure has returned to normal, and even though he still weighs over 90 kilos, he feels much stronger. "I'm proud to have muscles, not fat."

Some people are genetically predisposed to being overweight, but exercise can counterbalance genetics. Dr Ramasamy points out that studies on obesity in identical twins show that exercise can counter a genetic predisposition to gaining weight.

Will a few trips to the gym dissolve that belly or those clumps of cellulite? Unfortunately, says Singapore's Riyanto, spot reduction is not possible. Exercise doesn't work that way. Getting rid of one unwanted bulge means exercising the entire body. As for cellulite, it's the result of age, genetics, body fat, too little muscle and a history of dramatic weight changes. Connective tissue thins as we age, making fat deposits visible under the skin.

"Having a little more fat than those of so-called 'model figures' is all right provided you have a regular fitness regimen," YWCA Singapore's Loh says.

4. "I can't afford a gym membership."

Whether you hire a personal trainer, take yoga classes at the community centre, buy a treadmill or rent exercise videos, "spending money on fitness is really money well spent," Loh says. "As they say, health is wealth."

At the very least, get a good pair of shoes. Walking is free. You could form an exercise group with friends, play catch with your daughter or set aside Saturdays for family hikes. A recent Canadian survey found that children want adults to be involved in their physical activities. "Playing sports like football or going swimming with children or grandchildren is a good way to spend quality time with them," says Dr Santos-Ringor.

5. "I'm too far gone."

You're never too old or out of shape to start exercising. "People undertaking exercise for the first time will need a doctor's assessment, particularly anyone over the age of 45," Dr Ramasamy says. "Exercise should be started slowly and built up to higher levels or as recommended. Check with your doctor if you have problems or concerns."

"Swimming is a good non-impact exercise for everyone," says Loh. "Research has shown that heart rates in the water are on average about 14 per cent lower than heart rates for land-based exercises of the same intensity. In other words, an unfit person can begin to get fit without feeling uncomfortable due to a fast heart rate."

Ruth Cheah, 79, takes a daily 45-minute walk, goes swimming and does aqua aerobics at the YWCA Singapore once a week. She didn't start to exercise on a regular basis until she was 5[illegible]. "After doing all these exercises, my cholesterol level dropped and I stopped taking cholesterol medication," she says. "I feel active and alert. People tell me that I look younger than my age."

Another fitness option that is easy on the body is yoga. "It emphasises slow and gentle movements, allowing the person to maintain strength and flexibility without overexerting themselves," says Dada Surya, a yoga expert at the Ananda Marga Centre in Manila.

"It's a joy to exercise. I sorely miss it when I can't"

Angelita Sumura never made time for exercise. She led a busy life working at the National Food Authority. Maintaining a healthy weight was not a priority, and she liked to eat. When she and her husband decided to have a second child, her doctor was concerned that, because she suffered from irregular periods, she might have trouble conceiving. He suggested she shed 20 kilos to help correct her hormonal imbalance.

The thought of losing that much weight was daunting, but her doctor told her she was at risk for a variety of health problems. Sumura had another motivation: "I wanted to be attractive to my husband."

Besides dieting, Sumura started walking from her home to her jeepney station. Eventually she began attending aerobics sessions, then yoga classes.

Sumura lost the weight and today continues to exercise regularly. "It's part of my daily life now," she says. She has more energy, sleeps better and has a healthier sex life. What's more, her periods returned to its regular cycle and she fell pregnant. Today Sumura and her husband are the proud parents of four children.

So what did Didi Manahan do about her flabby body? She goes swimming with her niece and nephew, and joins them in trampoline jumping. She has cut down on social eating and meets up with friends who are physically active. Her exercise routine includes the treadmill three times a week, short- and long-distance running once a week each, and brisk yoga and badminton once a week each.

Manahan no longer feels stiff and lethargic. "It's a joy to exercise, and I sorely miss it when I can't."

She has lost about 10 kilos and looks much better, with a faint but definite sign of muscle definition on her upper arms.

Is it possible that Manahan's excess padding is shifting to muscle? She hopes so, because she wants to be energetic and independent for decades to come. "I met a 72-year-old man while running my first marathon," she says. "I want to be strong and fit like him when I reach his age." ■

From my father I learned that loved ones may pass, but they never really leave us

Reflections on a Summer's Day

BY JAMES MAYS

THE FAMILY FARM was finally listed for sale. It had been two years since Dad died, and this was my first trip back since the funeral. I knew I would never live there again, but I couldn't seem to let go. Since Dad's death, there had been two break-ins and a costly episode with damaged pipes, which forced me to admit that I had no use for 320 hectares of tomatoes and that I lived too far away to look after the place. It was time to move on. After seven generations in the family, my woods, my creek and my fields would pass to strangers. With a heavy heart, I signed the papers with the real estate agent and drove out to the farm one last time.

The summer's heat sure hadn't changed any over the years, I mused as I parked in front of the barn. I sat in silence, listening to the crickets. Dad always told the temperature by crickets. "Count the number of chirps in 15 seconds and multiply by four and you've got the temperature in Fahrenheit," he taught me. I counted and calculated – 96 degrees (36 Celsius).

In the barn, the keys for our old truck dangled from their nail; I took them down and fired up the two-tonne Studebaker. The engine turned over easily, and I listened to its idling comforted by the silky purr. Dad had shared his love of old vehicles with me, and our passion had become my vocation. I had become an automotive historian.

It was hard to believe that our truck was half a century old and had racked up more than 500,000 kilometres. It was not just a truck, the big green Studebaker was part of the family. It had been on the farm before I was born. As I sat, I half expected Dad to round the corner of the barn and climb into the cab with me.

Another love we had shared was "running the roads," as Dad called it. When summer heat drove us from the fields, we'd climb into the Studebaker and just ramble along the gravel roads, Dad spinning stories about the folks who had once lived here. He knew the heartaches and triumphs planted on every hectare of soil in these parts.

Memories of those afternoons filled my mind as I eased out of the barn and down the lane. I drove slowly past the big maple tree at the first crossroads, and I could almost hear Dad say: "First schoolhouse in these parts was built right there in 1826." I knew that if I stopped and waded through the corn, I'd find initials carved into the trunk of that tree: "J C M loves H B H."

"That was your great-great-grandfather James Clifford Mays – you're named after him – and your great-great-grandmother, Hattie Beatrice Hall," Dad told me. "They got hitched when they were 16. On Christmas Day. They left the church in a brand new white Studebaker sleigh and farmed right over there." He waved towards the railway track. "They had 11 kids and owned the first tractor in this area, a Rumely Oil Pull. Now that was a fine machine.

Absentmindedly, I pointed the truck towards the village, but there really wasn't a village there any more. I stopped in front of a beat-up, boarded-up building that had once been Hobbs's General Store.

Trips to town had always begun here with an exchange of pleasantries with the Widow Hobbs. The broken soda machine still stood guard by the front door. There was a time when the big blue chest gave out ice-cold sodas for five cents. Dad and I would stand next to the cooler and down the sharp, watery grape drinks, returning the empty bottles to the rack to save us the two-cent deposit.

Suddenly he slowed and turned off the road. The truck bounced up an almost forgotten pair of ruts, overgrown with grass. We stopped in front of an empty farmhouse, its roof beginning to sag. "Old Man Davidson," Dad said, swallowing hard. "is in the nursing home. The neighbours found him wandering down the road in his nightshirt last winter. I promised his only son to look in on things once in a while."

We headed towards the padlocked barn. Dad shifted a big rock and uncovered a brass key. "Let's take a look," he said mischievously. We slid the heavy door far enough to squeeze inside. Antique vehicles crammed the dimly lit interior. Dad knew I would be thrilled.

No sooner had we got under cover than the clouds loosed a downpour. As rain drummed on the tin roof, Dad told stories of each vehicle, from the 1918 Ford one tonne truck to the creamy-yellow-and-white 1958 Packard hardtop. The big 1930 McLaughlin-Buick had been a rumrunner during Prohibition. Two bullet holes in the rear were souvenirs of a brush with the law. "That 1922 Nash over there is the first automobile I ever rode in."

Dad told stories of each vehicle, from the 1918 Ford truck **to the 1958 Packard**

ONE OF THOSE afternoon adventures now came to mind. I was a journalism student, home from university for the summer. Dad and I left the general store and just poked along. There was no need for talk; the satisfying crunch of gravel under the tyres was conversation enough. Clouds piled up in the western sky, and the breeze shifted direction ever so slightly. "Going to get a soaker," Dad mused. I nodded and grinned as two fat raindrops splattered onto the windscreen.

Dad said "I was seven years old and walking to town one morning. Dr Davidson – that would be Mr Davidson's granddad – asked me if I'd like a lift. I was speechless. I thought motor cars were for rich people." Pulling his handkerchief out of his bib pocket, Dad carefully wiped dust from the chrome radiator

Now I retraced the road alone and found myself at the Davidson place. The brass key was still under the rock, and the dusty cars and trucks hadn't moved. I walked in a quiet reverie through the barn

When I finally drove away, I already knew where I was going next – just a little way up the road to the graveyard. I wondered how many times Dad and I had come here to cut the grass over the years. He'd always say, "Church burned down in 1954," and scuff his boot at the charred foundation. "The members decided to rebuild in town. Oh, they took care of the yard for a long time, but now they're too old and the young ones have all moved away."

Dad loved this place. His grandfather had built the stone wall, and Dad had played hide and seek and other games here when he was growing up. "We'd catch fireflies and put them in jars on summer evenings. I kissed my first girl right under that beech tree."

I walked through the weeds and found the headstone for Mama and Papa, my maternal great-grandparents. They had come from Holland with no English and huge dreams of a better life in the New World. "Work harder!" Papa used to shout. "Immigrants like us must work harder!" We all worked harder. It was ingrained in us. Not until I was in secondary school did it occur to me that I wasn't an immigrant.

Next to Mama and Papa were buried all four grandparents and great uncle Wesley. "Wesley went down to California. He wrote for the *Los Angeles Times*. Made it big, he did," Dad used to tell me. "You keep writing, son. You've got his talent."

Dad's plot was next to Mother, who had died in 1986. Matching headstones stood sentinel. Dad's missing only the date of death. "Not yet," Dad always grunted as he pulled up weeds. "It's not my time. It will be soon enough. You know, son, these good folks may be under this sod, but as long as we remember their stories, they somehow never quite leave us."

Now my fingers traced the date chiselled on that rose-coloured granite: July 3, 1999. I stood quiet for a long time, lulled by the breeze, until the sun hung low on the horizon and it was time to go.

THE BIG GUY

Entry in a catalogue of antique art objects for sale: "Statue of God the Father. Approximately life-size."

ALL IN A DAY'S WORK

ONE OF MY STUDENTS could not take my university seminar final exam because of a funeral. No problem, I told him. Make it up the following week. That week came, and again he couldn't take the test due to another funeral.

"You'll have to take the test early next week," I insisted. "I can't keep postponing it."

"I'll take the test next week if no one dies," he told me.

By now I was suspicious. "How can you have so many people you know pass away in three weeks?"

"I don't know any of these people," he said. "I'm the only gravedigger in town."

DURING MY FIRST night flight, I asked my instructor what to do if the engine failed. "Get the plane gliding in a controlled descent, attempt to restart the engine [illegible]," he explained. "I'll [illegible] I might flying at that the ground below will not be clearly [illegible] turn on the landing light when you get close to the ground, and if you like what you see, land."

"All right, but what if I don't like what I see?" I asked.

"Turn off the landing light."

THE FIRST knocking on the door belonged to a police officer. Fearing the worst, my husband, who was working on a job site, opened up.

"Is that yours?" asked the officer, pointing to a company van that was pulling out into the narrow street.

"Uh, yes. It is," said my husband.

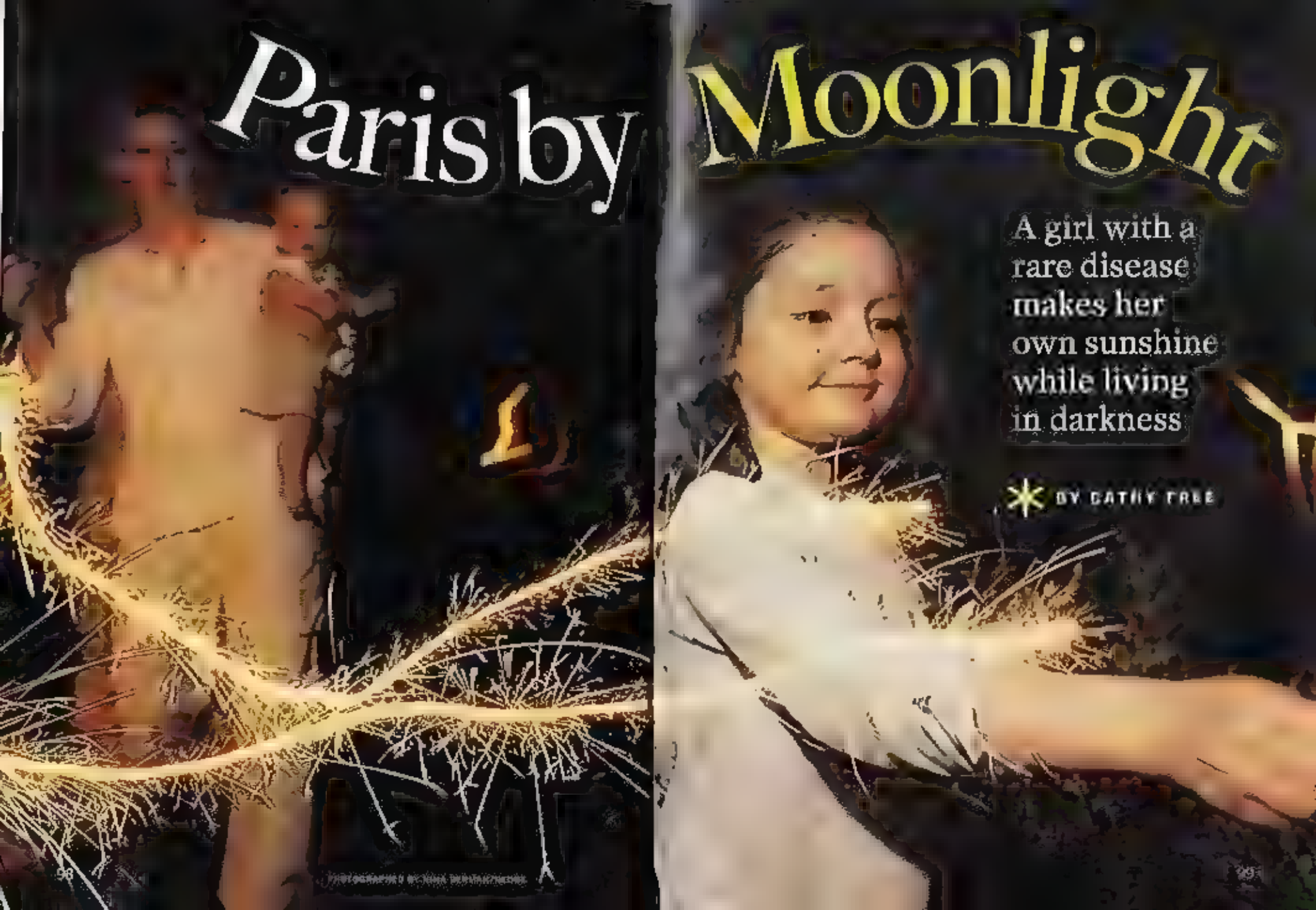
"Would you mind moving it?" asked the officer. "We've set up a speed trap and the van's causing everyone to slow down."

$ You could earn $.00 for your own funny story. See page 1

Paris by Moonlight

A girl with a rare disease makes her own sunshine while living in darkness

BY CATHY FREE



SHE COMES out to the grass to dance just as the setting sun turns the red bluffs surrounding her home to cool shades of purple and lavender-grey. As she leaps through the shadows in her bare feet, six-year-old Paris Feltner watches for the stars to appear and the moon to rise.

"When the moon comes out, it's safe for me," she explains, spinning and twirling. "I love the moon." Indeed, late at night, after she says her bedtime prayers, Paris tells her parents, "Love you big as the moon."

She does not know the warmth of the sun on her face or the beauty of a sunrise. Like any six-year-old girl, she wants to be a princess when she grows up. But Paris isn't like other children. She is a child of the night.

Her mother, Jennifer Feltner, will never forget the day just before Easter in 1999 when she picked up the telephone in her kitchen and heard the news. "The results from Paris's biopsy are positive," the dermatologist told her. "She definitely has X.P."

"I went numb," Jennifer says.

X.P. is short for xeroderma pigmentosum, a rare genetic condition that prevents sun-damaged skin cells from repairing themselves. Affecting only one in a million people, the incurable disease can lead to skin cancer if extreme steps aren't taken to avoid all ultraviolet light, including indirect light from windows and fluorescent bulbs. In America, only about 250 people are documented with the disorder, most of them children, states Dr Kenneth Kraemer, a research dermatologist at the US National Cancer Institute in Bethesda, Maryland. X.P. sufferers are more than 1,000 times as likely to develop skin cancers as other people, he says.

It is a cruel disease, requiring those who have it to spend most of their lives behind shuttered windows, shielded from sunlight. Some patients might lose their sight, become disfigured or degenerate neurologically and become mentally retarded – afflictions that Paris has so far avoided. Jennifer and Todd Feltner are grateful for that, but they never imagined raising a child in darkness.

The Feltners, both Mormons who grew up in large families, married in 1993 and settled in Washington, Utah, with dreams of creating a home full of laughter and song together. "Our religion emphasises family as the most important unit on this earth," says Todd, 32. "The source of joy and happiness. Jennifer and I had hoped to have at least four kids, maybe more."

In the early days of their marriage, the pair worked as waiters. Todd, who went on to become an accountant, remembers hearing some parents calling their child. "Paris, come here!" He thought, *That's the perfect girl's name.*

Todd and Jennifer's firstborn was a healthy boy they named Parker. In 1997, they were ecstatic when Jennifer became pregnant again. Their daughter entered the world on February 12, 1998, weighing just over three

Each morning, Jennifer slathers sunblock on Paris and baby brother Paxton

kilos, with grey-brown eyes and dark curls. They agreed to name her after the City of Light.

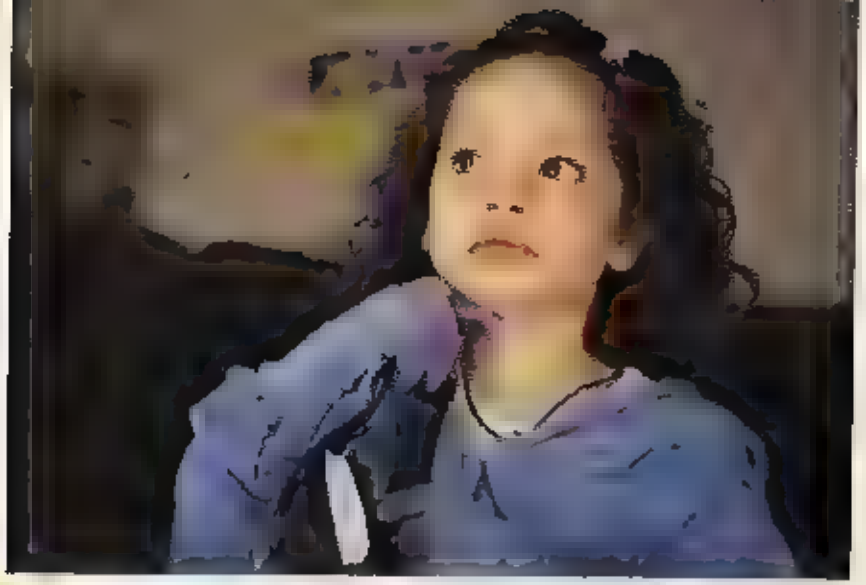
They brought Paris home from hospital and took the same precautions against the sun that any parent takes with an infant. They bought her a sunbonnet and covered her with sunscreen before outings at the park. During get-togethers with relatives, they made sure to seat her in a shady spot.

For the first three months there were no signs of anything unusual. Then little dark spots began to appear on Paris's legs, arms and face. In the shopping centre, strangers stopped the Feltners to comment on their baby's cute freckles. "I had freckles as a kid – we thought it was perfectly normal," says Jennifer, 33. She didn't know they shouldn't be there.

But at Paris's nine-month checkup, Dr Robert Dowse commented that the freckles were troublesome. "A baby shouldn't have them," he said. He referred them to Dr Wendy Matis, a dermatologist five hours away in Salt Lake City, who was equally puzzled.

"She kept going from our exam room to her office to look up things in her medical books," recalls Todd. "You could tell she'd never seen anything like this before." Meanwhile, Jennifer waited for two hours, growing increasingly nervous. Finally, the doctor came in with the startling news. "I think it's X.P. – xeroderma pigmentosum," she said.

Matis wrote the name down and told them that X.P. was a genetic disease. "We thought, *This is impossible*," says Todd. "Nobody in our families has anything like this." She explained that any offspring of parents who were both carriers (most often unknowingly) had a 25 per cent chance of



Going outdoors for daytime activities – school, dance class, play dates – means that Paris must wiggle into her bright-blue sunblock suit

having X.P., and then she listed the risks that came with the disease. Never in my wildest dreams did I expect to hear something so bad," Jennifer says.

The doctor went on to say that, until they got results from a skin biopsy to confirm the diagnosis, the Feltners should treat Paris as if she definitely had X.P. Light should be blocked from every window. Paris should not be allowed outside during daylight, even for a minute, and extra care should be taken when opening the door to talk to neighbours or fetch the mail.

Todd and Jennifer left the doctor's surgery and drove home in silence with blankets covering the side windows to shield Paris from the afternoon light. "We were stunned," says Todd. "In fact, we were in denial."

Still, they stopped at the grocery store to buy a roll of butcher paper for the windows, remembering the doctor's frightening words: "Every exposure counts."

The next morning, the Feltners went from having their breakfast in a sun-splashed kitchen to sipping orange juice in the dark. Parker, who is free of the disease, complained when his bedroom windows were darkened. But he adjusted to the idea when his mother explained that sunlight could be dangerous for his sister.

Jennifer, a housewife and part-time dance teacher, burst into tears days later when Paris crawled to the sliding door and peeled back the butcher paper. "It was so depressing not to look out," she says. What made the weeks spent indoors worse was the waiting for news about the biopsy.

Finally, nearly five months later, the

call came. "Positive" was the only word Jennifer heard. Sobbing, she told the doctor she couldn't bear to talk about it and hung up. Then she called Todd, who says he sat immobilised at his desk, knowing that when he walked through the front door that night, his family would be changed for ever.

After a sombre dinner that evening, the Feltners put Parker and Paris to bed, and then retreated to their bedroom to hold each other. "All we could think about were the things we would not be able to do as a family," says Todd. A few nights later, overwhelmed with sadness and unable to sleep, Todd curled up alone on the living room sofa. But after several weeks of crying and worrying, he made a decision. "We have to find a way to be positive," he told Jennifer. "We have to move on if Paris is going to have anything resembling a normal life."

After scouring the Internet, looking for new information and trying to find others whose children have xeroderma [illegible], the Feltners went into action. They replaced the butcher paper on their windows with special UV-blocking plastic, and adjusted their schedules, staying up later so that Paris could spend more of her waking hours during darkness. And they checked out local shopping centres and stores, making a list of off-limits places with fluorescent or halogen lighting.

When Paris was 18 months old, Todd heard about a foundation in Virginia that made a special head-to-toe sunblock suit, using material designed by NASA. One drawback: it would cost as much as $2000. Through jumble sales and donations, friends and strangers rallied to put some sunshine in Paris's life, raising some $5000 – more than enough for two suits.

At first, Paris hated wearing the outfit, especially in summer, when temperatures in southern Utah can top 46 degrees. But these days, anxious to experience daylight, she enthusiastically jumps into the bright-blue suit for trips to and from school, dance class and friends' homes. At a town parade last year, she wore the suit under a spangled costume while riding on a float with her dance troupe.

"It's like a sleeping bag," explains Paris, lying on the floor to slip into the coveralls for a trip through the back yard to her friend Cambra Dinsmore's house. After her mum helps adjust her hood and sunproof goggles, she bolts out the door into the glaring midday heat and skips to Cambra's back door, where she is quickly ushered inside. Giggling, she peels off the suit and tosses it onto the sofa like a dirty T-shirt before heading to Cambra's room to play with dolls.

Many of the Feltners' neighbours have tinted their own windows in case Paris comes to visit. And at the primary school and the Mormon temple, every window has been tinted so that Paris can safely attend kindergarten and Sunday school.

In late 2002, the community rallied together to raise money to build an

indoor playground for Paris. More than 150 people pitched in to construct an addition to the Feltners' house that includes a swing set, small swimming pool and a sky-blue ceiling with puffy clouds. "I couldn't imagine what it must be like for a child not to run out and swing to her heart's content," says Ed Braithwaite, a building contractor who contributed materials and labour to the project. "It's one of the small pleasures in life." Now Paris can spend hours swinging under her very own sky, pumping her legs in rhythm with the pop music that she turns to full throttle on the radio.

The family has even found ways to take holidays, travelling after dark, and taping black plastic to the windows of hotel rooms before Paris is allowed inside. They've visited Disneyland, and Todd dreams of one day flying his daughter to Paris to explore the city's beauty by night.

None of it comes without strict vigilance, and there have been close calls. "If you don't live with this every day," says Todd, "it's easy to forget."

"She knows the consequences of being in sunlight. We don't have to remind her. And yet she isn't growing up afraid," says her mother.

If exposed to light, "I could die," Paris says simply.

Because she was diagnosed as an infant, Paris's chances of living a long life are good – provided she continues to avoid the sun's rays. The US National Cancer Institute's Kraemer, who has studied X.P. since 1971, knows of one patient who lived until his mid-seventies. That's rare, but not impossible, he says. "We see different degrees of sensitivity. Those who are protected early are going to do better."

Meanwhile, scientists are working on treatments, including the acne drug Accutane and creams made from bacterial protein, to help reduce the frequency of cancerous lesions. And through gene therapy there is hope one day for a cure.

> Paris knows the risks of sunlight. "I could die," she says

Luckily, Paris has thus far had only one mole removed – on her right thigh – and it was benign. Her parents' biggest fear is melanoma. "We put sunscreen on her first thing every morning and check her skin every day," explains Jennifer.

"We always have to think ahead," she adds. And while Paris seems content now, the Feltners know difficult times are just down the road.

What happens when Paris is a teenager, Jennifer worries, and wants to go out during the day with friends? Will she be able to attend university and find a job? If she marries and has children (she would have to marry another X.P. carrier with the same genetic defect – a very unlikely possibility – to pass along the disease),

how will she do all the things busy mothers need to do?

They try to remain positive, but Todd and Jennifer Feltner have plenty to worry about, especially given that their youngest child, a one-year-old boy named Paxton, has also been diagnosed with X.P.

"It just about broke my heart," says Jennifer, who debated with Todd for four years whether to have any more children after Paris's diagnosis.

"Having Paxton was the hardest decision we've ever made," says Todd, but with a 75 per cent chance that the baby would not get the disease, he and Jennifer thought the odds were in their favour. Though the Feltners have no plans for more children, they are determined to make the best of the cards they've been dealt.

Paris's attitude has helped. When she learned that Paxton had X.P., she clapped her hands and cheered, says her mother. "She ran to her swing set and shouted, 'Me and Paxton, me and Paxton! He's going to love it in here!'"

"At least with Paris, he'll have someone who can relate to what he's going through," Jennifer says quietly, watching her daughter cover Paxton with wet kisses. "They're going to be the best of friends."

Together they will be children of the night. On a warm, clear evening scented by desert sage, Paris Feltner asks, "Is it dark enough for me?" When her mother nods, she excitedly bolts out into the fresh air, leaving the front door wide open. She scrambles onto the trampoline in her back yard and bounces under the stars, pigtails flying.

As her brother watches from the arms of his mother, Paris jumps higher and higher, reaching for the moon.

THE PRICE OF FAME

I was walking in Manhattan and I saw a very good looking [illegible] in a shop window so I went in. Before I could say anything, the manager said, "Oh! Tony Randall! I'm such a big fan of yours! I have to call my wife – she'll never believe me!" He calls her up and says to me, "Here, say hello, anything, talk to my wife. Say whatever you like."

He flattered me so much I bought the tie and six shirts. I didn't have enough money, so I asked, "Will you accept my cheque?" He said, "Do you have any identification?"

PA Photos/Reuters/Sarah Poundall/Corbis/Jack Mitchell/Getty Images

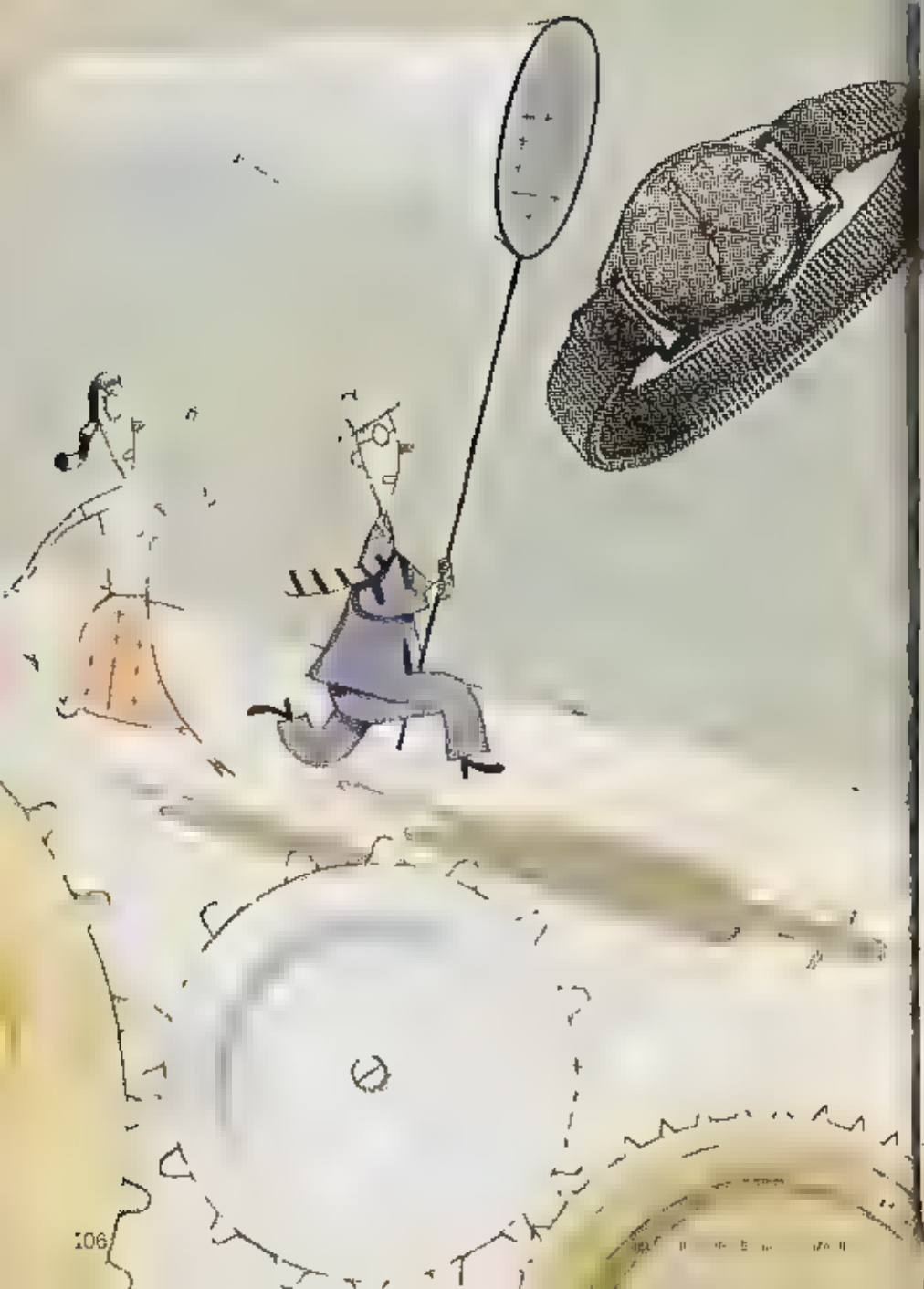
Oprah was on Jay Leno's show and he said, "Are you going to Dr Phil me?" Apparently, I have become a verb. I guess you have made it when you become a verb.

Sir Tony Randall's Biography, Eggheads

Ways to Save 20 Minutes!

What if someone told you that you could reclaim a chunk of your time each day? **Here's how**

BY LIZA FINLAY



You've put in a longer-than-eight hour day at work, cooked dinner, folded laundry, and you still haven't got around to the brisk walk you vowed to take every day. You want to find more time in your day, but who can manage it? Well, maybe you can.

Here – from time managers, professional organisers and meal planners – is the best advice for carving out anywhere from 20 minutes to two hours every day.

1. Fix a deadline. That's time management consultant Harold Taylor's suggestion. Then you can focus and ignore distractions and finish the job. "If you know you have an hour to get that report finished, you just get it done," he says.

2. Schedule your time. Taylor estimates that spending ten to 15 minutes every morning mapping out your day can save up to six hours a week. Prioritise. According to Taylor, 20 per cent of the items on a typical to-do list yield 80 per cent of the results, so start with them. "You will never get absolutely everything done, so you might as well get the *right* things done," he explains.

3. Know what's for dinner. This avoids time-sucking last minute dashes to the shops. Many of us wait until the we're heading home to decide what's for dinner. Sandi Richard, a meal planning expert and author of a book series *Cooking for the Rushed*, suggests posting a list on the refrigerator, encouraging family members to contribute meal ideas and then shopping once a week.

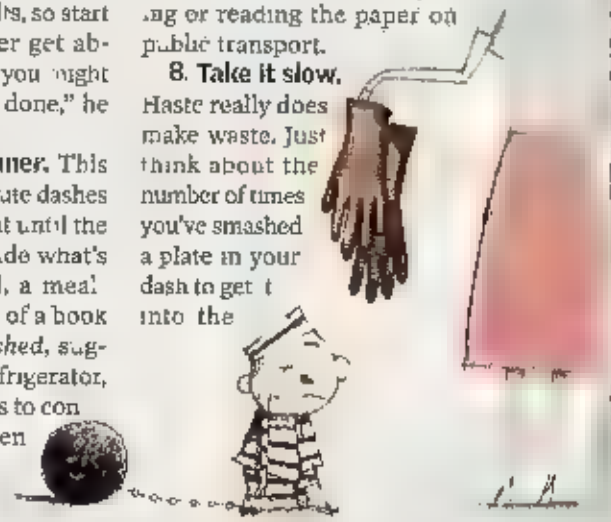
4. Just say no. Try one of these no-can-do lines from time manager Tracy Lyn Moland, author of *Mom Management*: "I can't do it, but I know someone who can" or "I'm not sure I'm the most qualified person, and I'd hate to do a mediocre job."

5. Child labour revisited. Many of us have a gold mine of help in our homes, but we're not mining it, says parenting coach Alyson Schäfer. Make children feel valued by involving them in household upkeep. Post a chore list that the entire family helps create, with age-appropriate jobs.

6. Set play dates – elsewhere. If you have young children, send them to a friend's home and offer to host playtime another day. "It works both ways," says Moland, a mother of two.

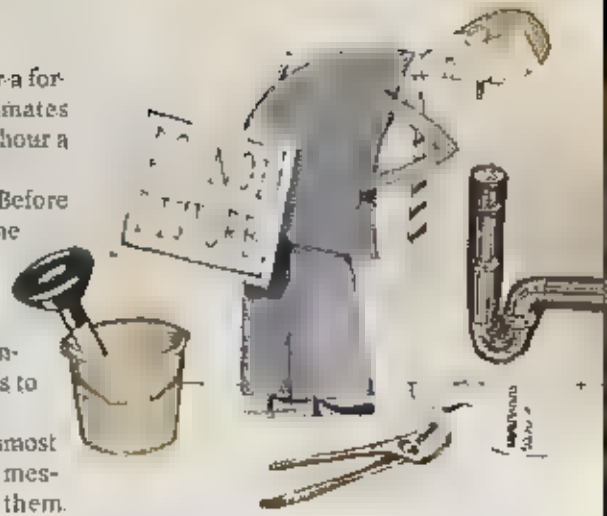
7. Travel smart. Urban dwellers can spend hours every day behind the wheel. That time could be better spent gabbing with a friend who works near you while carpooling or reading the paper on public transport.

8. Take it slow. Haste really does make waste. Just think about the number of times you've smashed a plate in your dash to get it into the



dishwasher or doubled back for a forgotten briefcase. Moland estimates that most people spend half an hour a day duplicating tasks.

9. Be a kitchen organiser. Before cooking a meal, pull out all the tools and ingredients you'll need and line them up on the bench. A five-year study confirmed that this practice shaves ten to 27 minutes off the average time it takes to prepare a meal.



10. Kick the e-mail habit. Almost 80 per cent of us look at our messages as soon as we receive them. Researchers calculate that we lose about two minutes for every single e-mail interruption, which can really rack up over the day. Set aside two times a day for reviewing your e-mail, such as first thing in the morning and after lunch. Delete spam without opening it.

11. Use a DO NOT DISTURB sign. Taylor reckons that between 30 and 120 minutes are lost every day due to interruptions such as co-worker visits and deliveries. "Typical business people are said to engage in 170 interactions a day, via e-mails, phone calls, faxes or face-to-face conversations," he says. "That number goes a long way to explaining the 200 to 300 hours of uncompleted work most of us have at any given time."

12. Walk and talk. Investing in call display spares you calls from telemarketers or that old school friend who talks your ear off. And a headset at home lets you return calls while washing dishes or putting clothes away. "I love my hands free phone," says Estelle Gee, owner of Orderly Lives, a Canadian organising service. "It hooks right on to my belt so I can walk and talk."

13. Give your essentials a home. According to organisation expert Barbara Hemphill, 20 to 30 per cent of a disorganised person's day is squandered looking for lost items. Gee finds that keys and papers (reports, forms) are the biggest culprits.

14. Double it. Doubling a stir-fry or curry recipe often takes no additional time. If you double up your cooking for five days and freeze the extra, you'll have an entire week of premade meals ready to go.

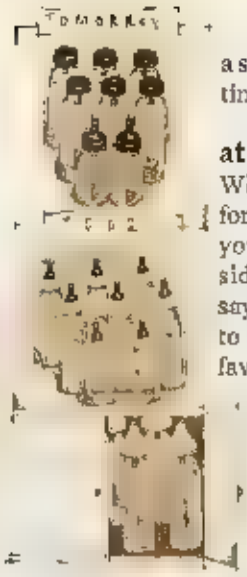
15. Cheat a little. Make laundry more manageable by sorting the whites, darks and colours into three baskets as you go. Also, instead of laundering window coverings twice yearly, throw them in the dryer on the fluff setting

to remove surface dust and debris suggests Donna Sma...n, author of *Organising Plain & Simple*.

16. Aim for completion. Moland says we could slash time spent on housework by "aiming for completion, not perfection." Remember, she says perfectionists spend 50 per cent or more of their effort squeezing out the last ten per cent of results.

17. Find a buddy. Few of us hit the recommended target of 30 minutes of vigorous exercise four to five times weekly. "But working out with a friend makes exercising fun," says Pilates trainer Lisa Schkar. If the buddy system doesn't work for you, incorporate activity into your daily routine by walking to work or jogging to your kids' school to pick them up.

18. E-Order. If possible, have food delivered to your door through online grocers. Many archive your recent purchases, so you don't have to recreate a shopping list every time you order.



19. Stay focused at the mall. Whether shopping for clothing or gifts, you can easily get sidetracked here, says Moland. Stick to three of your favourite shops. "What you waste in travel time, you more than make up for in speedy decision-making."

20. Visit the freezer aisle. For food emergencies, Sand. Richard relies on frozen "bail you out" meals. She also keeps pizza ingredients on hand. "You can throw together a low-fat pizza in less than ten minutes with whatever you've got in the fridge, and it's healthier than takeaway." Another trick: After grocery shopping, toss meat in a large freezer bag with marinade and then freeze. This simple process takes only about three minutes but saves many.

THE INTERNET-TO-ENGLISH DICTIONARY

The language of the Internet is chock-full of shortcuts. Some, like LOL (Laugh Out Loud) and KISS (Keep It Simple, Stupid), have gone mainstream. But new online lingo is always popping up. For example:

AYPI: And Your Point Is?
BFG: Big Evil Grin
HHO 1/2 K: Ha Ha, Only Half-Kidding
TYCLO: Turn Your CAPS LOCK Off

Flight of Fantasy

It was the perfect birthday gift – hot air and high living

BY MATTHEW PARRIS

WHAT, for her seventy-seventh birthday, do you give a woman who has everything? I don't mean that my mother is rich or lives in luxury. But it's never been easy to think of what to give someone with six children who has all the possessions she wants.

She and my dad love their house in the Spanish Pyrenees. Mum loves books, but no book came to mind. My brother Mark had brought her a lovely blue dress (which did delight her), John and Roger were away and Deborah, Belinda and I racked our brains. A seventy-seventh birthday calls for something memorable.

"Would she like ballooning?" her son-in-law Mane. had asked me a month or so before. We were in a balloon at the time.

"No," I replied. "She'd be terrified." We glanced at each other. "We might have to blindfold her and lift her in," I continued. "She hates heights. She

says she feels a horrible urge to jump."

"But she couldn't. She couldn't get out of the basket."

"True." We exchanged another glance. "So ballooning it is then."

Manel and Deborah made the arrangements. We told Mum there was to be a birthday surprise for which the whole family must gather at Deborah's house on their farm outside Manlleu, in northern Spain, at 7 a.m. (balloonists rise early, while the air is still).

And so, on a clear morning in August we drove to Manlleu. We assumed that my father Leslie, who is 80, wouldn't wish to balloon, though we resolved to ask him just in case. We decided against blindfolding Mum.

But what if she refuses to get into the basket?" my friend Julian asked Belinda. My sister and I answered simultaneously, "She won't. She won't want to disappoint us."

Everyone was there when Mum and Dad arrived. The balloon was laid out deflated across Manel's field, its blue and yellow panels dazzlingly bright. It looked awfully big. Mum stepped from the car, her face frozen in a "just what-I-always-wanted" expression.

"Did you guess from the early start?" we asked.

"I thought you might give me a dog," she replied, as though a dog presentation would have had to start early. My father, meanwhile, was off across the field as fast as his stick could take him, inspecting the basket, burners and strings. A retired engineer he was fascinated. "It's good to do new things when you're old," he said. We realised that not only did he want to come, but he assumed he would.

I CAN TELL when my mother is afraid, but in her terror she remained practical. "Tell me a few minutes before we get in," she said, "so I can pop to the toilet." By now, the half-inflated canopy was a billowing yellow-and-blue sausage on its side.

"Off soon," we said to Mum, now back from the toilet. "Manel's bringing a stepladder so you can climb over the side of the basket."

There were nine of us in the basket, and a great roar as the burners shot their flames into the marquee above us. Mum flinched. The wicker creaked.

And up we went. Surprisingly fast. Everything familiar dwindles beneath into a sort of map. We saw the house in Manlleu where we once lived, the town square, the school of English my mother founded and ran for 25 years.

And soon Manlleu was drifting west – or rather we were floating east. We tracked the course of the River Ter and drank champagne – even Mum, who doesn't drink – and sang "Happy Birthday," which feels inconsequential in a balloon, and Dad was a little faint with the attitude. But it was wonderful.

By now, Mum's fear had gone. I think she did enjoy it, even if it wasn't a dog. "It makes you feel more secure," she said, "that the sides of the basket are up to your shoulders, so you can't jump out." ■

My Maestro

BY JOSHUA BELL

He taught me the notes, but more importantly he shared his love of music

AS A BOY, I played the violin surrounded by ghosts. My teacher, Josef Gingold, plastered his Bloomington Indiana studio walls with autographed photos of musical greats he admired or had met on his travels. Their faces watched our music-making, and inspired my small fingers to coax songs from the strings.

When I became Gingold's pupil at age 12, he was already a legend at Indiana University, a gregarious Old World exile who had played under Arturo Toscanini and George Szell.

We almost didn't meet. The day before my first solo recital – which someone had convinced him to attend – I was tossing a boomerang at my parents' farm. My mother fretted whether this was wise. Sure enough, the boomerang whirled back and sliced my chin open. The ER doctor stitched me up. Five centimetres to the left and I couldn't have held my violin. But I played, wounded.

Gingold liked what he heard. I enrolled in a chamber music programme he taught that summer in New York state. There, I realised I had never met anyone who found music so fun. He would play two parts of a string quartet at once. He laughed and laughed, and I left those lessons buzzing. My parents saw my excitement and asked Gingold to continue to teach me back at home. He was wary. Too many children had been pushed on the violin, Gingold thought, and were living others' dreams. But he let me try.

So I went to his studio with the ghosts on the walls, to enter the long tradition of one musician's hands guiding another's. My teacher taught me that music could be more than a hobby. It could be a life.

Born in Russia in 1909, he came to America in 1920 and studied violin with Vladimir Graffman. In 1937 he won a spot in the NBC Symphony Orchestra and later was the Cleveland Orchestra's concert master.

But Gingold found his true calling as a teacher. He was a musical inspiration for kids, who brought him joy. Unlike many maestros, he refused to scold his students, a decision that stemmed from a childhood horror. As a boy, he had once played his violin at a school assembly. His fellow students loved it, and applauded for so long the principal had to order them to stop. Later, Gingold's art teacher pulled him aside. "Let me see your hands," she said. "Are those the hands that made that beautiful music?" He beamed, so proud to be recognised for what he could do. Then she took a wooden pointer, smacking his palm so hard it

stemmed from a childhood horror

damaged a nerve. Years later, he still felt pain. The teacher had decided he shouldn't feel so good about himself. That stuck with him. He went the opposite way with his students.

Sometimes I wish he had been more strict. I was a kid. I goofed off. He wanted me to have a normal childhood and was secretly pleased when my mother told him I'd spent all day playing video games instead of music. During my afternoon lessons, we'd take breaks and listen to records. He let me play his Stradivarius. I was amazed by the depth of sound, the colours floating from that instrument. He helped me create a very personal relationship with music, but he did not teach me how to play every note. Many teachers have students copy all their fingerings. Gingold gave me the tools to teach myself – chamber music, solos, anything.

I studied with him for nine years and he became the grandfather I didn't have. In my family, everyone played an instrument. During holidays, we gathered for informal concerts we called musicales. One year Gingold joined us. He invited some of his international students to come play too. He led our little orchestra most of the night in this multicultural circle of warmth and music. He couldn't stop smiling. With [illegible] in a crowded living room, he was happy if he had a violin in his hand.

Gingold didn't pull strings to further my career, but I pushed myself. Soon the spotlight found me. I made my professional debut at 14, playing Mozart's Third Violin Concerto with the Philadelphia Orchestra. He flew to see me. At 17, I played at Carnegie Hall, and he saw me there, too, smiling like a proud grandfather.

When I moved to New York at 21, I couldn't see Gingold as much as I'd have liked. His health was failing, and I dreaded the day he would leave me. On New Year's Day in 1995, I paid him a visit, bringing a photo of him I wanted autographed to hang on my wall like the ghosts on his. I walked into his house, and in his hand he had one last gift for me – a rare picture of Niccolò Paganini, the crown jewel of his studio collection. He signed his own photo. I played. We talked through that last wonderful afternoon. The next day he had a stroke. He died two weeks later.

EARLY SUCCESS can be dangerous for a musician. You hear of prodigies who rise fast and flame out. Sometimes that's because teachers spoon-feed these young people every musical idea. At some point they feel they don't need teaching any more, so they stop learning. Gingold was always learning. So am I.

Someday I want to teach too. Gingold's ghost – the autographed photo on my wall hung next to Paganini – will be watching. As taught by [illegible]

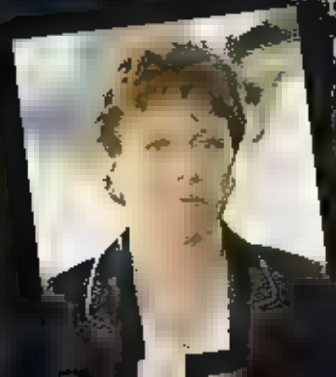
The Russians say that a pessimist is a well-informed pessimist

One policeman's persistence brought a mother to account for the murder of her four children

Courage of Conviction

BY LARRY WRITER

IN THE EARLY EVENING of March 1, 1999, Detective Senior Constable Bernie Ryan was investigating a home invasion in the rural Australian town of Singleton when his mobile phone rang. The message: "Go to the hospital. A baby is dead, the fourth child of this couple to die in ten years."



A young, affable but no-nonsense cop, Ryan drove to the hospital with his colleague, Mick Prentice. He saw the

baby's body and interviewed her parents. Kathleen and Craig Folbigg. Craig told him their three other children had died of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) – the unexplained death of an apparently healthy baby while asleep. The implication was that Laura might have died of SIDS as well. "You have to keep an open mind – and they seemed grief-stricken," recalls Ryan. "The look on Craig's face . . . I felt so sorry for them. But it's not my job to feel sorry. It's my job to find out why."

He sensed something was amiss from the outset. At 19 months, Laura seemed too old to have died of SIDS. And some things Laura's mother told Ryan in that first hospital interview didn't seem to add up.

Kathleen said when she and Laura arrived home that day, the baby was asleep. She'd taken Laura to her bedroom and laid her in her bed. Later, she'd found the child dead. But at the Folbiggs' house Ryan noticed Laura's bottle and shoes on a futon in the lounge room. Why would she carry a sleeping baby into bed and then take her shoes and bottle back to the lounge room? Surely you'd leave them in the bedroom.

To Ryan, the items in the lounge room indicated Kathleen was trying to put Laura to sleep, but the baby would not cooperate. Could Laura have died because she wouldn't doze off?

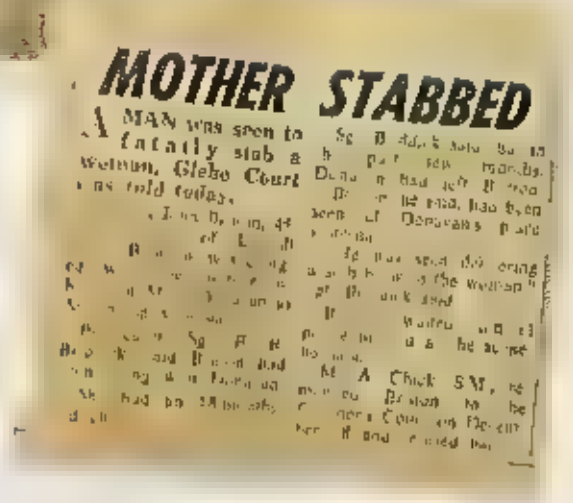
Kathleen also told Ryan she'd heard Laura coughing shortly before she discovered her body, but in later interviews she didn't mention coughing. "Just small details," says Ryan. But they rankled.

Even harder for the detective to believe was that Laura, and over the preceding ten years the Folbiggs' other three children – Caleb, 19 days, Patrick, eight months, and Sarah, 11 months – had all supposedly died of natural causes or cot death. So began four years of relentless detective work for Ryan, now 35, and a team of fellow investigators.

HE SENSED SOMETHING WAS AMISS. AT 19 MONTHS, LAURA SEEMED TOO OLD TO HAVE DIED OF SIDS

It didn't take Ryan long to discover that tragedy and death were nothing new to Kathleen Folbigg. According to a psychiatric report tabled at her trial, Kathleen's father, Thomas Britton, a Welsh-born gangster, most likely sexually abused her as a baby. Then, when Kathleen was 18 months old, Britton stabbed her mother – after whom she was named – to death in a Sydney street. The reason? "I told her the baby was fretting for her and not eating."

Four-year-old Kathleen in the garden of the house in Newcastle where she grew up; (right) a newspaper clipping of her mother's violent death in 1968



MOTHER STABBED

A MAN was seen to fatally stab a woman, Glebe Court ... was told today.

Britton told the arresting officers: She said she couldn't care less and was not coming home, I killed her, and it can't be helped."

After the slaying, Kathleen lived with her mother's sister, who gave her up at the age of three because of her uncontrollable behaviour. Kathleen was then placed with foster parents Deidre and Neville Marlborough of Newcastle, north of Sydney. Their daughter Lea was 17.

Lea Bown has told police that when she had a son, seven-year-old Kathleen began to misbehave. "She'd get sent down to the peach tree and was made to stand there. She'd never break, never show tears. Just stood there and kicked the dirt."

Kathleen quit secondary school at 15. Waitressing in Newcastle three years later, she met steel worker Craig Folbigg, five years older. They wed in 1987 and bought a home in Mayfield, a suburb of Newcastle. According to the couple's acquaintances, Kathleen became a flirtatious woman who needed to be the centre of attention at parties. She was obsessive about her appearance, spurred on by Craig's jibes about her increasing weight and her compulsion to be attractive to men. She was a gym junkie, her nails were always filed and her hair coiffed. She changed its colour to suit her mood.

The Folbiggs' first son, Caleb, was born on February 1, 1989. But just 19

The Folbiggs' house in the Newcastle suburb of Mayfield where two of their children, Patrick and Caleb, died

days later, Craig was woken at night by his wife's screams. "My baby, there's something wrong with my baby."

Caleb was dead. Medical authorities concluded he was a victim of SIDS. Craig was devastated, but Kathleen did not curtail her socialising. Craig said later she didn't seem upset.

Both parents agreed they should have another child, and on June 3, 1990, Patrick came into the world. On October 17, he suddenly suffered massive brain damage, became epileptic and went blind.

Four months later he too was dead. Doctors believed his airways became blocked during an epileptic fit. Again, Craig noted, "The world stopped for me, but Kathy just got on with it."

Seemingly putting the horror behind them, the couple moved from their modest Mayfield bungalow to a new home in Thornton, a small town some 20 kilometres from Mayfield. At the end of 1991, according to Craig, Kathleen became adamant that they must have another child. She told him there was no use being married any longer if they were to be childless. Craig had serious qualms but buckled. Sarah was born on October 14, 1992.

KATHLEEN was often angry with Sarah but channelled her frustrations into exercising and partying. Then on August 30, 1993, Kathleen roused Craig from sleep with more terrible news. According to the Folbiggs' story then, Craig ran to Sarah's room and saw the child lifeless in her cot, her lips blue. There were small scratches under her chin, but still, SIDS was diagnosed.

The Folbiggs moved once again, to Singleton, northwest of Newcastle. Craig recalled he was dumbstruck when, in 1996, Kathleen gave him a new ultimatum. "They must have a fourth baby, or the marriage was over."

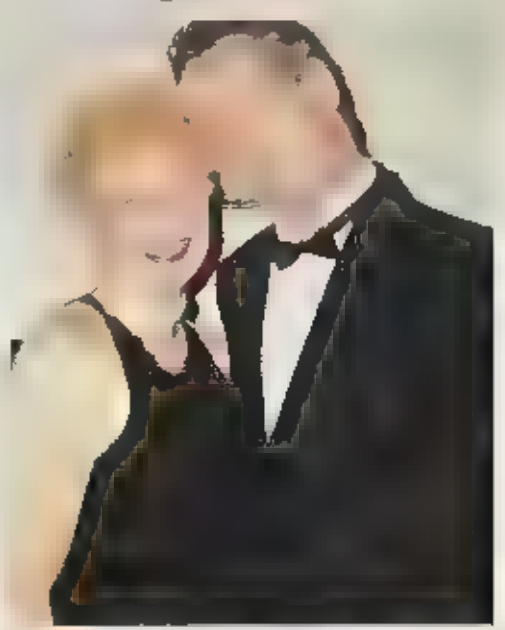
Laura was born on August 7, 1997. And then on March 1, 1999, Kathleen claimed she found her dead in her bed. That was the day the Folbiggs were interviewed at Singleton hospital by a young policeman named Bernie Ryan.

"I was just a country cop," says Ryan. He had grown up in Maitland, near Newcastle, and joined the police force in 1988. His first posting, at 20, was to the outback town of Broken Hill. In 1990 he was dispatched to Wilcannia, then a hotbed of racial tension. It was there, says Ryan, he learned to be a policeman. "I got my nose broken in a riot, and there were five murders in one year."

Young Ryan's heroes were cops. Not the ones on television, but real life "good, old-style police ... the guys who do the procedure and get it right." He aimed to emulate their work as he moved from station to station.

After Wilcannia he was posted to the quieter town of Singleton in 1992. A stint in the streets where he'd grown up, in Maitland, followed.

He married his home-town sweetheart and today they have two daughters, aged three and seven. Then he was back to Singleton, to the Criminal Investigations Branch, and soon after he became a plainclothes detective.



Less than five months after Laura's death, Kathleen and Craig Folbigg attended a ball

After that first interview at Singleton Hospital with the Folbiggs, Ryan secured their home for a forensic investigation, and led Kathleen and Craig through the SIDS checklist, a four-minute routine to indicate whether SIDS was the cause of death. He then returned to the police station and went

to work. "I was suspicious as hell in light of the other three kids' deaths," he recalls.

With doctors diagnosing death by natural causes or SIDS in each case, even though the symptoms of SIDS are similar to smothering, he wondered whether anyone had asked hard questions. "In each case SIDS was a possibility but not the only one. When I gathered all the information about the other deaths and Patrick's acute life-threatening event, I was amazed. Three deaths had occurred without one coronial inquiry being conducted.

It shocked me that police didn't fully investigate the death of the third child after the diagnosis of SIDS."

Medical experts told him four children from one family dying of SIDS was unprecedented. Ryan and his team began collating all the medical evidence and findings on each Folbigg child. "We planned to look at it all together and see if what killed them was some metabolic problem never tested." Or if there'd been foul play. Ryan's files soon burgeoned to more than 1000 documents.

AMID THE PROBING in the weeks and months after Laura's death, Craig Folbigg called Ryan. Kathleen had left him, he said. Then a bombshell: he and Kathleen had not been truthful in their statement. Contrary to what they'd said before, Kathleen had not happened upon their dead third child Sarah in her cot on her way to the toilet. Craig said Sarah at that time was sleeping in a bed at the foot of his and Kathleen's bed, not in her own room. Kathleen had yelled angrily at the 11-month-old earlier that evening. Craig had woken around 1a.m. and neither Kathleen nor Sarah were in their room. He saw light coming from under their bedroom door. He went back to sleep. Twenty minutes later, said Craig, he was woken by Kathleen's screams. She was standing in the doorway staring at their daughter's body in her bed.

This was the break Ryan was looking for, but he was careful, telling Craig flat out he had better not be playing games. "I didn't want him to get Kathleen in trouble out of spite."

Then Craig handed over Kathleen's diary. And, for the policeman, its disturbing revelations about Kathleen's state of mind as she gave birth to and cared for each of her children were dynamite. Ryan interviewed Craig for eight hours on May 21, then arranged to continue on the following Sunday, May 23.

But on the Saturday night, Craig went to Kathleen's new place and caught her with a lover, an American she had met at the gym. He banged on her door, shouting, "Why did my daughter have to die for you to achieve all this?"

Kathleen swore at him and slammed the door in his face. Later that night Kathleen returned to their home and demanded to know where he got off accusing her of Laura's death.

"I'm not the only one who thinks you did it," Craig told her. "She said 'Who else?' And I said, 'The police and more than likely a lot of other people around town.'"

Doomed children (clockwise from far left): baby Caleb lived for 19 days only; the Folbiggs with Patrick; Kathleen and Laura, the only child who lived until her first birthday; and baby Sarah, dead at ten months

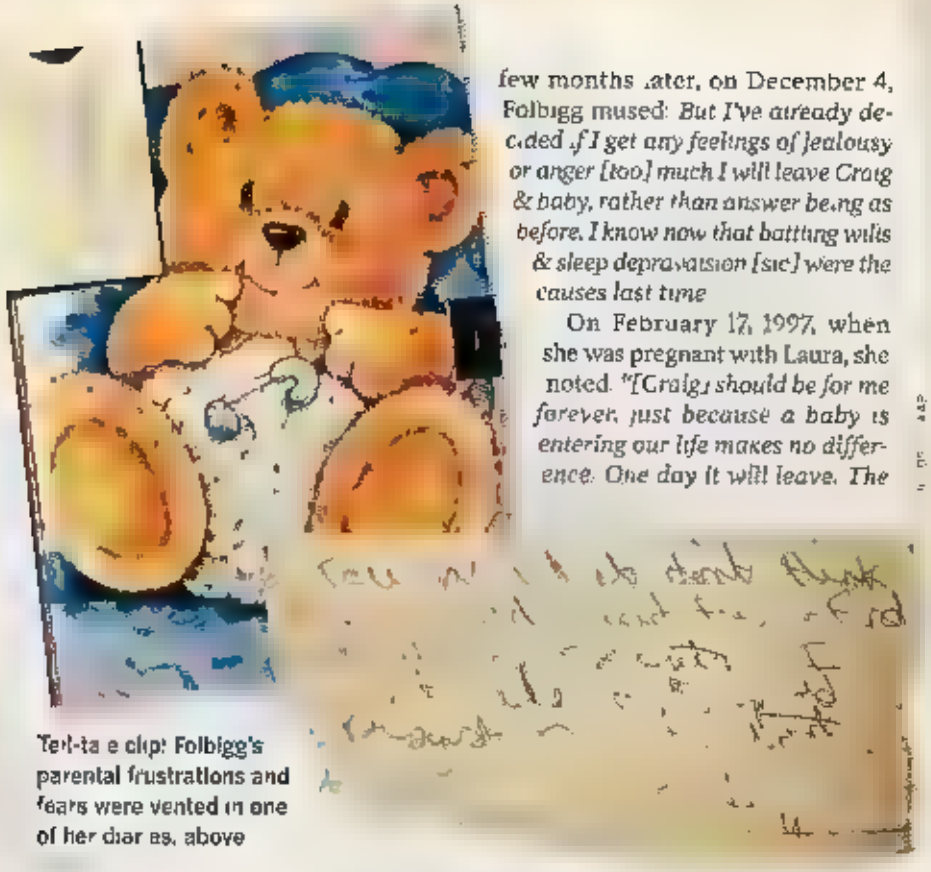
Kathleen sat on the lounge and burst into tears: "How could you think that of me? I was their mother. I loved them. It broke my heart."

Always forgiving of Kathleen, Craig reconciled with her that night. And on Sunday he retracted his earlier statement at the police station.

"I'd had the odd suspicion," Craig later explained his about-face, "but had always faltered with it." The investigators were bewildered and furious.

But Ryan still had the diary. An A5-sized book with pictures of teddy bears and Renoir cherubs on the cover, it looked innocuous. But its contents, and those of a second diary that police found in the Folbigg home, chilled Ryan.

On June 3, 1990, Kathleen Folbigg wrote, *This was the day [Patrick] was born. I had mixed feelings this day. Wether [sic] or not I was going to cope as a mother or wether I was going to*



Tell-tale clip: Folbigg's parental frustrations and fears were vented in one of her diaries, above

few months later, on December 4, Folbigg mused: *But I've already decided if I get any feelings of jealousy or anger [too] much I will leave Craig & baby, rather than answer being as before. I know now that batting wills & sleep deprevation [sic] were the causes last time*

On February 17, 1997, when she was pregnant with Laura, she noted: *"[Craig] should be for me forever, just because a baby is entering our life makes no difference. One day it will leave. The get stressed out like I did last time. I often regret Caleb and Patrick only because your life changes so much*

On June 22, 1996, she jotted down: *In my most dangerous mood, I'm not nice to be around and always want to be anywhere but where I am.* Where she wanted to be was living it up at parties, with *music and men to show off to.*

And on October 14, 1996, the month before conceiving Laura, she scrawled: *I would like to make all my mistakes and terrible thinking be converted . . . obviously I'm my father's daughter. A others did . . . but this one's not going in the same fashion. This time I'm prepared & know what signals to watch out for in myself*

Then on June 11, 1997: *My brain has too much happening, unstored and unrecalled memories just waiting. Heaven help the day they surface & I recall. That will be the day to lock me up & throw away the key.*

And then later: *[Sarah and Laura] are chalk and cheese. And truthfully just as well. Wouldn't of [sic] handled another one like Sarah. [Laura] saved her life by being different. Laura's different. Totally she doesn't push my button anywhere near the extent [Sarah] did. Which is good for her . . . With Sarah all I wanted was her to shut up. And one day she did.*

I lost it with her, she noted on January 28, 1998, when Laura was almost six months old. *I yelled at her so angrily that it scared her . . I nearly purposely dropped her on the floor and left her.* Also on that day, Kathleen reflected: *I feel like the worst mother on this earth. Scared that [Laura will] leave me now. Like Sarah did. I know I was short-tempered and cruel sometimes to her & she left. With a bit of help.*

FOR RYAN, the coroners' reports on the deaths of the other children had already raised serious doubts that SIDS was the cause of death. But the diaries, revealing the exasperations and conflicts of a woman under extreme stress, convinced him he was deep into a murder inquiry.

Ryan pressed on with the investigation into Laura's death, and reopened inquiries into those of Caleb, Patrick and Sarah. He found no canvassing had been done in the various neighbourhoods about what kind of family the Folbiggs were. So he and his team set about gathering this information. Had residents seen anything untoward? Had the parents taken the children on recurrent trips to hospital?

One day at home, his colleague, Mick Prentice, phoned and told him to turn on the television. There was a programme about an American woman who'd killed her five children and the deaths had all been misdiagnosed. *This is just like my case!* Ryan thought.

He e-mailed the prosecutor, saying he was investigating a case with similarities. Could he give an opinion? He also contacted American paediatric forensic pathologist, Dr Janice Ophoven, who'd given evidence in the case, and asked her to review his team's findings. Both were glad to.

Ryan sent off case files to the US, including tissue from the children's organs, heart, lung and liver, which had been kept in hospital encased in wax. The dogged cop then flew to the US and Britain to consult with SIDS experts and a renowned paediatric pathologist, who reviewed his files and agreed natural causes were unlikely in the Folbigg deaths.

Back home, he visited the Australian Bureau of Criminal Intelligence in Canberra. They put him in contact with the FBI and Mossad agents to help him devise an interview plan, based on Folbigg's diary, to elicit any information she might be hiding.

Kathleen knew she was under suspicion when she sat with Ryan for a nine-hour grilling at Singleton police station. He asked if she could close her eyes and see the faces of her children.

"I honestly tell you now I can see Laura's clearly." But she needed photos to bring to mind the other children's faces, and couldn't recall details of their deaths.

"How do you feel for those children?" asked Ryan.

"For them? Or how do I feel for myself?" Kathleen replied.

"How do you feel for them?"

"That they are somewhere peaceful, happy."

"Do you really believe that?"

"I don't know. I prefer to believe that. That's probably what it is."

"Do you know what sort of person would kill four children?"

"I have no comprehension, and I don't even want to think about it."

Ryan then asked her if she was responsible for the deaths of her children, one by one. She replied no to each name.

In late 2000, Ryan was convinced he had enough evidence to press charges and took his findings to the Newcastle director of public prosecutions (DPP) for advice on whether the department believed his case against Kathleen Folbigg would hold up in court. To Ryan's dismay, the advice came back negative. The DPP told him he should first seek a coronial inquiry.

The DPP's ruling was "conservative . . . but not a wrong decision," says Ryan. But he adds, "I thought we had her cold. Four babies had died, and my colleagues and I had worked so hard for so long establishing a case. And we were backed up by respected experts overseas. But the DPP thought we'd be better off going to an inquest first."

For Ryan, it was a nerve-racking dilemma. A coronial inquest may not be impressed by the dearth of physical evidence and decide that Kathleen had no case to answer.

"I had sleepless nights. I guess I lacked the courage to charge her myself. I was scared of failing and having costs awarded against us." Not just that, but Kathleen Folbigg, who, he was convinced, was a serial killer, would be free. Then he called a colleague, senior deputy state coroner Jan Stevenson, and asked her to read his files. She did, and told him, "If you believe in what you have against Folbigg, you must lay charges. Bernie, what's your problem? Just do it."

So, putting aside his qualms, Ryan defied the DPP's advice, and, as he was entitled to do, decided to charge Kathleen Folbigg.

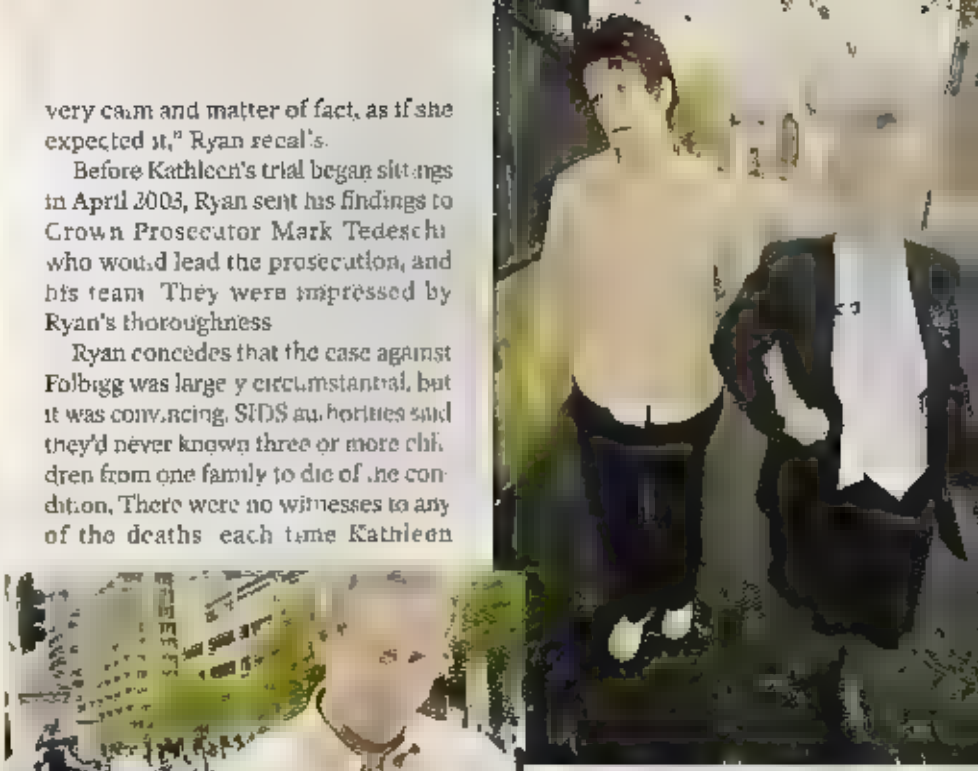
On April 19, 2001, he went to the home of Kathleen, who was no longer living with Craig, and arrested her. He charged her with four counts of murder, one for each dead child, and one of grievous bodily harm for the assault on four-month-old Patrick. "She was very calm and matter of fact, as if she expected it," Ryan recalls.

Before Kathleen's trial began sittings in April 2003, Ryan sent his findings to Crown Prosecutor Mark Tedeschi, who would lead the prosecution, and his team. They were impressed by Ryan's thoroughness.

Ryan concedes that the case against Folbigg was largely circumstantial, but it was convincing. SIDS authorities said they'd never known three or more children from one family to die of the condition. There were no witnesses to any of the deaths, each time Kathleen "found" the infant's lifeless but still warm body.

In court, Tedeschi argued that although Kathleen wanted children, she resented the intrusion of the babies into her life because they got in the way of her partying. "[She was] desperate to resume working, going to the gym, her social regime, her sporting life, her sexual life . . . There were times she couldn't abide the demands of parenthood. She resolved this by killing the children. She was totally obsessed by her own needs, wants and desires."

The prosecutor said Kathleen suffered sleep deprivation and insecurity, and resented Craig's lack of support. When stressed, she became enraged and suddenly smothered her children to death with her hand or a pillow "in a flash of hatred, anger and resentment."



Kathleen Folbigg was comforted during her trial by Salvation Army officer Joyce Harmer; husband Craig left the court without comment after his wife was sentenced

SHE NEEDED PHOTOS TO RECALL THE CHILDREN'S FACES AND COULDN'T RECALL DETAILS OF THEIR DEATHS

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"The prosecution was always about the Folbigg children and the search for the truth," says Bernie Ryan

The court heard how Kathleen had been in a jokey and vivacious mood at Laura's wake and was back sweating it out at the gym just days later. Apart from some gym acquaintances, her only supporter in the courtroom was Salvation Army officer Joyce Harmer who held her hand and talked with her throughout the grim proceedings.

The defence based its case on the lack of physical evidence incriminating Kathleen. It maintained that the prosecution's reliance on circumstantial evidence should be of concern to the jury. It insisted that the children's deaths were a coincidence, that they'd died of SIDS or organic illnesses and that in all other respects Kathleen Folbigg had been a loving and caring parent.

Says Ryan, "They said Caleb had a floppy larynx. Is it possible that contributed to his death? Yeah, anything's possible. Patrick had epilepsy and encephalitis. Could that have been the cause of his death? It's possible. Sarah had an elongated uvula. Could that have obstructed her airway and killed her? Anything's possible. Could Laura have died of SIDS? Maybe." But the sheer unlikelihood of all this weighed heavily against Kathleen.

In the end, Ryan's case held up. On May 21, the six-man, six-woman jury found Kathleen guilty of the manslaughter of Caleb, of inflicting grievous bodily harm upon and murdering Patrick, and murdering Sarah and Laura.

Kathleen, in a dark blue suit and

light brown blouse, glared at Craig, then collapsed weeping in the dock. And her wrenching sobs were not the only ones that resounded in the tense courtroom that day. Recalls Ryan: "Everyone was crying. Journalists, the jury, family."

Yet for Ryan, sitting in the courtroom behind Craig Folbigg, there was no sense of triumph. "I was sad for Kathleen, sad for Craig, sad for their kids," he says. "The case was just so tragic."

On October 24, 2003, New South Wales Supreme Court Justice Graham Barr sentenced Kathleen Folbigg to 40 years' imprisonment, with a non-parole period of 30 years. She took the news impassively this time. When she becomes eligible for release she will be 66, long past child-bearing age.

Justice Barr described Kathleen, who continues to maintain her innocence, as "psychologically damaged" and said her condition "left her unable to ask for any systematic help or remove the danger she recognised by walking away from her child. She could confide in nobody. She told only her diary."

Bernie Ryan, now a detective inspector, feels sorry for Kathleen. He knows she'll do hard time in jail. Other prisoners despise child killers. Yet after the sentencing, he had thoughts only for her lost children.

"Spare a thought for them," he said. "Caleb would have been 14 now. Patrick 13. Sarah 11 and Laura six. This prosecution has always been about the Folbigg children and the search for the truth. May they rest in peace."

TOO MUCH REALITY?

I realised that my five-year-old grandson had been watching too many reality TV shows the day we attended a relative's wedding.

As the four bridesmaids walked down the aisle towards the front of the church, he turned to me and asked, "Is this where the groom decides which one he wants to marry?"

BROTHERS IN ARMS

Saddam Hussein's sons, Uday and Qusay, may have been eliminated, but lesser-known members of the Hussein clan have come to the attention of the American authorities. They include:

Huray, the sports fanatic. Eckray, the radiologist. Fbay, the Internet czar. Regay, the half-Jamaican brother. Tupay, the one with bad hair. Gulay, the singer/entertainer.

More will no doubt be discovered.

Tips From the Queens of Clean

Attack your household cleaning with these secret weapons from Kim Wood Burn and Aggie Mackenzie, authors of *How Clean Is Your House?*

To brighten a dirty bath, fill it with warm water and a couple of scoops of biological washing powder and leave it overnight. The same trick works on roasting tins.

WD-40 removes the stickers children put on bedroom doors and keeps stainless steel shiny. The only stuff that makes subsequent cleaning easier.

On painted walls, shift crayon marks by scrubbing with toothpaste. Finger marks can be dabbed away with a piece of white bread.

Lemon juice removes garlic or onion odours from a chopping board. Rub your hands on a metal tap to get rid of the smell.

Shine plant leaves with a banana skin – it will pick up the dust and leaves a shiny film.

White vinegar gives a sparkle to mirrors, glassware and windows, and makes limescale disappear from taps (but not powder-coated ones).

Safety for Beginners

A PLAYPEN CAN be a great convenience - it's a safe place to put your child when the phone rings or a household chore needs to be done. But the Singapore Health Promotion Board reminds parents that playpens are meant to be used for only short periods of time, particularly for children who are crawling or walking.

Some points to keep in mind when buying a playpen:

• Choose one that is age appropriate. Most infants can pull themselves to their feet from nine months of age and begin walking at around 12 months.

• Heavy playpens are safer than lighter models, which may tip over if a child leans against the sides.

• The sides of a playpen should be more than 50 centimetres high and the spaces between the bars should be between 5 and 8.5 centimetres.

• All locks and catches on the playpen should be hidden.

The board suggests putting toys in the playpen to entertain the child, but be sure that they aren't large enough to be used to climb out.

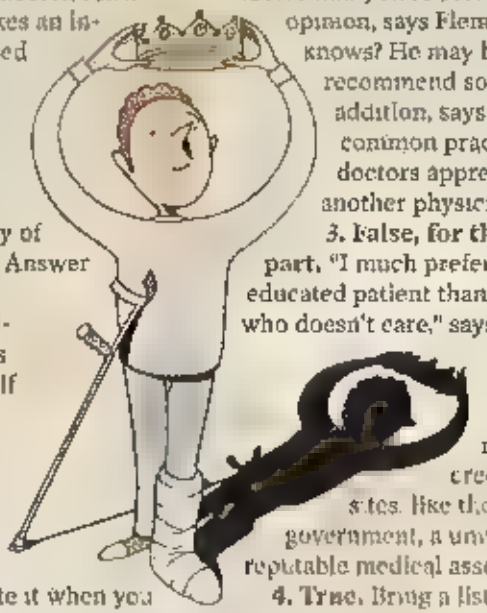
It's All Feet to Me

YOU'VE HEARD about high arches and flat feet, but when was the last time a shop assistant asked if your feet were Greek? Some athletic shoes are better suited to certain foot shapes, say podiatrists. It all depends on the relative length of your toes. If the big toe is the longest, you have "Egyptian" feet. Those feet with the second toe longer than the big one are designated "Greek." And if these toes are of equal length you have "square" feet. "Be sure your shoes accommodate the longest toe, not just your big one," says Stefan a Penkala, lecturer in podiatry at the University of Western Sydney. A centimetre's space beyond the toe is recommended.

Are You a GOOD PATIENT?

Do your visits make your doctor cringe? Take our quiz to find out if you're a pleasure or a pain

IF YOU WORRY THAT your questions, concerns and problems are a bother to your doctor, relax. "A good patient takes an interest and is engaged in our discussion about her health," says Michael Fleming, a doctor and president of the American Academy of Family Physicians. Answer true or false:



1. It's OK to challenge your doctor's recommendations if they seem wrong.

2. Your doctor would be offended if he knew you wanted a second opinion.

3. Physicians hate it when you look for health information online.

4. You should bring background information to your appointments.

5. Doctors need to know if you're using alternative treatments.

Answers: 1. True. As long as you don't do it in an adversarial way, it's perfectly acceptable to question why your doctor is recommending something, says Dr Rebecca Patchin, a spokesperson for the American Medical Association. After all, it's your health that's at issue.

2. False. As a courtesy, tell your doctor that you're seeking another opinion, says Fleming. Who knows? He may be able to recommend someone. In addition, says Patchin, it's common practice, and doctors appreciate having another physician weigh in.

3. False, for the most part. "I much prefer to have an educated patient than someone who doesn't care," says Fleming. But don't believe everything you read. Stick to credible websites, like those of the government, a university or a reputable medical association.

4. True. Bring a list of your questions or concerns, and bring all your medications. "This way I'll know what other physicians have given you, and by looking at the dosage and date, I can tell whether or not you're taking them," says Fleming.

5. True. Your doctor will want to know why - maybe she can help too. Also, some therapies interfere with medications, says Patchin.

When Yoga Gets Tough

Don't overstretch yourself on the stickymat

YOGA may be a low-impact, soothing, stress-reducing workout, but that doesn't mean it's risk-free. Doctors are seeing more yogis with a range of problems, from minor sprains to debilitating injuries usually associated with rugged exercise.

"Yoga is a great way to stretch and strengthen, but injuries occur if you stretch too far, too fast," says Dr Edward Toriello of the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons. Here his tips for pain-free posing:

- Look for an instructor who is a member of an organisation that provides standards for yoga instructors.
- Start at the beginning. Avoid challenging classes and choose one small enough (20 students or less) so the teacher can spot you for correct form.
- Realise that it can take months to achieve certain poses.
- If you injure yourself, take time to heal – including one completely pain-free week – before you go back.

LAURA FLYNN MCCARTHY

fast fact

15% of women polled drove themselves to a hospital before giving birth

SOURCE Jelly Belly International

LIFESAVING SCAN

Most victims of aneurysms have no clue their artery wall has a deadly bulge that could burst. Aneurysms grow slowly over time, usually with no symptoms. Scientists do know who tends to be at higher risk, and screening is easy. A noninvasive ultrasound can spot an abdominal aortic aneurysm, the most common kind.

If repair is needed, surgery is the answer, says Dr George Todd, chief of surgery at St Luke's-Roosevelt Hospital Centre in New York. In one technique, a stent is inserted into the aneurysm through a eight-centimetre incision in the leg, to bypass the artery. Blood flows through the stent, not the bulge, which then shrinks.

Who needs a screening? Men over 65, smokers over 50, and anyone over 40 with a family history should go every three years. If you're at risk, the test can give you peace of mind. And it may save your life. NELL S. GRIFFITH

Eat Greek, Live Longer

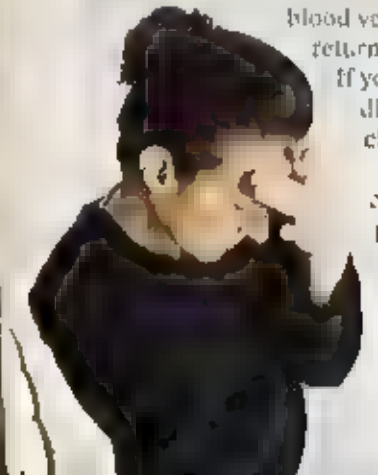
[illegible] cheers have [illegible] like the [illegible] eating the [illegible] keep us live! Now a [illegible]

[illegible] at Harvard and the [illegible] of Athens Medical School asked the eating habits of 22,043 Greeks for nearly four years [illegible] Mediterranean diet cut the risk of death from cancer and heart disease by 25 per cent or more. Greeks eat lots of nuts, fruits, [illegible] olives, fish, moderate levels of dairy and alcohol, and some meat. A typical day might include these meals.

Breakfast Yogurt with honey and fresh fruit

Lunch Salad with tomatoes, cucumbers, olives, rocket and feta.

Dinner Grilled fish with lemon, eggplant, pita, green vegetables in olive oil, wine [illegible]



If you blame stress for your aching head, check your diet. [illegible] foods lead to swelling of blood vessels, which can give you a headache, says neurologist David Buchholz. Coffee doesn't make the list, since caffeine relieves headaches by constricting blood vessels. Once caffeine wears off, the pain can return worse than before (called a rebound headache). If you get headaches often, cut these foods from your diet, then reintroduce them one by one to see if the chemicals in them are a factor.

- **Cheese** Aged ones like Brie and blue cheese contain the amino acid tyramine, a natural by-product of the ageing process.
- **Alcohol** Drink too much, and you'll awake in pain. But red wine, brandy and champagne have more congeners, known triggers.
- **Meats** The nitrites used to preserve cured meat and sausages are a culprit.

Heat Your Vegetables

THE BEST WAY to cook vegetables is in the microwave, despite the results of a recent study which suggested this cooking method depletes important anti-oxidants. The study was flawed say experts.

Researchers in Spain microwaved raw broccoli in two thirds of a cup of water and found that the food lost up to 97 per cent of three key antioxidants. But the vegetables were cooked for five minutes much longer than necessary - and with too much water, says Barry Swanson, a food scientist at Washington State University and a spokesperson for the Institute of Food Technologists.

"They cooked it to death," he says. "The more time and water you use in cooking vegetables, the more the nutrients are destroyed or leak into the water."

Even for frozen vegetables microwaving is best since it's fast and requires little water. The right way to do it: Place broccoli in a container, loosely covered, and add a tablespoon or so of water. Then cook it for just a few minutes.

RACHEL A. BERMAN

LOSE WEIGHT WITH FIBRE

Eat less, feel fuller? That's one benefit of a high-fibre diet. Weight loss is another. Researchers at Tufts University reviewed data on fibre and found that people who ate an extra 14 grams of fibre daily cut their kilojoule intake by about ten per cent; those who added 12 grams lost about half a kilo per month. "Fibre can help with weight loss because it increases the sensation of fullness and influences the hormones that regulate food intake," says study co-author Edward Saltzman.

The American Heart Association recommends that adults get 25 to 30 grams of fibre daily. Fill up on fibre with salad, fruit, beans and nuts.

Learn Your Exit Etiquette

It pays to walk away from a job with good grace

WE MAY be more savvy about marketing ourselves to prospective employers these days, but few of us are schooled in the art of leaving a job graciously. Here's how to bow out in style:

- **Breathe.** "If you've been feeling emotional, the first thing to do is cool off," says Jacqueline Allen of [illegible], an Australian human resources consultancy specialising in outplacement services.
- **Plan** [illegible]. If it feels right, share information about your future plans. This is not the time to chronicle grievances.
- **Write** a brief, formal letter of resignation. Mention the positive experiences you've had and state your best wishes for the company's future.
- **Leave** clear debriefing notes so it's easy for your replacement to pick up where you left off. Don't use this period to download every file you ever worked on. As Allen points out, a bad reputation can follow you to a new job, even one on the other side of the world. "Finishing on a good note is essential."

MARIE BURKE

Learning

Imagine going back to school without tests, marks or essays to write. You can explore subjects you've always been interested in online.

Authors and experts teach literature, forensics, feng shui and more. Most classes are free or under $50. university.barnesandnoble.com.

[illegible]. This nonprofit organisation offers courses ranging from herbology and journalism to mastering the internet. Cost: $15 for three courses. yu.org

[illegible] Columbia University's free archive lets you peruse lectures and seminars from various universities and museums. www.fathom.com.

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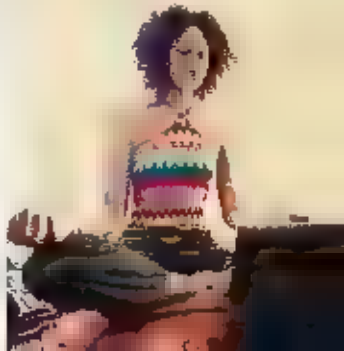

Customised First Aid

EVERY FAMILY should have a first aid kit in their home. But not every family's kit should be the same, according to the Singapore Health Promotion Board. The board has a few suggestions to get started.

• **Thermometer** Either the traditional glass type or the new electronic kind is an important tool for monitoring fever.

• **A small torch** – This can be used to find small objects embedded in an ear or nostril, and to look at the back of the throat.

• **Materials for treating small wounds** Cotton swabs, antiseptic solution, antibiotic ointment, gauze bandages and adhesive tape to secure it, and bandage scissors.

• **Tweezers** For removing splinters and things lodged in the skin.

• **Simple medications** – Paracetamol, antacids, antihistamines for allergies and runny nose, cough medicine and diarrhoea medicine.

After stocking your kit with the basics, customise it with special items your family might need such as inhalers for asthma. Remember that first aid is simply the first application of care. Keep emergency phone numbers nearby to call in the professionals for serious problems.

Ready Reader Rules

HERE'S HOW to help your beginner handle mistakes when reading aloud.

• If he is stuck on a word, tell him to sound it out, reread the sentence or look at the picture.

• If he makes a mistake and continues reading, ignore it if it makes sense. If it doesn't, wait until he finishes the sentence and ask him if it made sense. Read him the word if he's still uncertain.

• If your child makes a mistake and hesitates, ask if he understands what he read. Suggest looking at the problem word. If there's no progress, tell him the word.

PAUL KROPP in Canadian Living

Dads and DAUGHTERS

How Monopoly helped me decode my little mystery

"I'LL PAY you two thousand dollars, Daddy," says my daughter, Eleanor, sticking it her eight-year-old palm. We're playing Monopoly, and I've landed on Mayfair. Ellie owns it, with a hotel. She couldn't be happier. Neither could I.

Monopoly bores me to tears, but Ellie loves it. Usually, family life is too hectic to play, but not this week. It's just the two of us at home alone while my wife and son, 11-year-old Ben, are off on a trip.

For many dads by myself in a closed a week alone with a daughter can be terrifying. Girls can be such enigmas. My son seems far more straightforward and a bad day a younger version of me. But not Ellie. Why, for example, is she so dismissive when I compliment her drawing? It can be hard to know where I stand with her.

I'm not alone. 60 per cent of men say boys are easier to raise; just 23 per cent find girls less perplexing, according to recent poll research.

Yet I can't let my wife carry all the weight of figuring out Ellie. The *Wall Street Journal* recently reported that girls who are close to their dads "are less likely to be promiscuous, develop eating disorders, drop out of school or commit suicide."

How can I strengthen our bond? There are all kinds of resources – seminars, support groups and websites. Experts say it's critical for men to show they care, so I try a trick I've read about: slipping an "I Love You" note in her lunch box. She doesn't even notice it.

During our week together I decide to let Ellie call the shots. She puts out Monopoly. I grab a chair and offer to be banker. As we play, I'm reminded that time – not just quick notes or compliments – fosters real bonding.

Towards bedtime, I'm losing something like $15,000 to $80. "Let's finish tomorrow," I say. Her eyes twinkle.

When she gets into bed, I give her a hug. Maybe it's my imagination, but she seems to squeeze a bit harder than usual. ED SHANAHAN

To Pay or Not to Pay

THE TIP. It's such a small word, but this open-ended call on our generosity can cause much perplexity when eating abroad. So in which countries should you tip? And how much?

• The United States is a nation apart, with its catering trade running on tips. In a bar, you'll have a miserable evening unless you slip the bartender a few dollars with every round. On meal bills, you're expected to tip a minimum of 15 per cent, though 20 per cent is not uncommon.

• In Italy, don't give more than about ten per cent to a waiter. In Spain just round up to the nearest euro. Similarly, in Greece you might round 38.5 euros up to 40, but there's no standard percentage. Hungarians consider it unsafe to leave money on the table. Instead, quietly tell the waiter how much you want to give, and this will be added to your bill.

• France is different altogether. A service charge is automatically included in the restaurant bill, so tipping is discretionary.

• The Japanese have got around the problem by not tipping at all. Likewise, there's no obligation in Australia or New Zealand. It's just a reward for service.

GERARD GILBERT
in The Independent

SOLO? NO MORE!

If you're single and like to travel, you should know that some tour companies are finally easing the vice grip of double occupancy requirements. As well, an online organisation has emerged to help single travellers connect with one another.

TravelChums.com has more than 20,000 members worldwide. The confidential service is open only to registered members and includes internal e-mail, message boards and live chat.

Members can meet and identify those who share interests and travel plans. Registration in TravelChums is free and requires a list of personal information.

PHOTO: © KEN REID/GETTY IMAGES

How to Get Upgraded

IT'S ALWAYS nice to get something for nothing. When it's an upgrade to business or first class air travel, you can do your bit to help it happen, advises Keith Burton of the Association of British Travel Agents:

Join a frequent flyer programme. Airlines only upgrade because they have to (they overbook, calculating that some people won't turn up) and will choose their most valued customers first.

Ask if the flight is full when you check in. Say that if they're looking to upgrade, you'd like to be considered. Don't be pushy.

Dress smartly. The airline won't want to upset (fare-paying) first class passengers by seating them next to a scruffy backpacker.

Travel alone. You'll be easier to seat than a couple or group.

Don't be first at the gate. Staff won't want to hold up the queue and won't know yet which seats are free.

Ease Travel Tension

IN ADDITION to bad highways and drivers, road holidays have a hidden risk: heart attack.

Researchers in the US found that road-trippers were more likely to suffer a heart attack than vacationers who took planes, trains or other modes of travel. Driving requires concentration, which raises blood pressure – and the risk of cardiac incident, says lead author Willem Kop. Here, tips for a heart-healthy journey:

• **Don't rush.** Hurrying has been linked to increased heart attack risk, says psychologist Peter Wish. So leave early, plan stops and play games in the car to relieve stress.

• **Take breaks.** Too much sitting raises the risk of deadly blood clots. Stop to stretch every hour or so.

• **Drink up.** Dehydration taxes the heart.

LIFE'S LIKE THAT

ILLUSTRATED BY RAFAEL PANIZZI

I HAD NEVER BEEN so tired in my life. After my first child, Amanda, was born, my mother came to stay with me for a few weeks to help out, but I still woke up whenever the baby made the slightest sound during the night.

One morning, I groggily asked my mum, "How long before I stop hearing every noise Amanda makes?"

Mom was obviously only half-listening. "Honey, are you coming down with something?" she asked. "You were coughing in your sleep."

CAROL HERLONG

WHILE SIGHTSEEING in Kentucky, we stopped to take a tour of Mammoth Cave. A visitor in our group, looking up at the huge domed ceiling, asked the guide, "Has there ever been a cave-in here?"

"Never," he reassured us. "But if it did, look on the bright side. Where else could you get buried for $2.50?"

DOUGLAS MAYSON

IT BEGAN as an innocent game with my toddler son, Robert. I'd get in the fighter's stance and start shadowboxing. Jabbing with both fists, I'd say, "One-two, one-two," and he would imitate me over and over.

I never thought about the consequences of this little exercise until

$ You could earn $100 for your own funny story. See page 1.

[illegible] took our son to a birthday party. When the boy's mother was handing out noisemakers, she leaned over to Robert and asked, "Would you like one too?"

It took my wife a while to explain her way out of what happened next.

ALFRED GARRO

OUR PASTOR was winding down the service. In the back of the church, the fellowship committee stood to go to the church hall and prepare snacks for the congregation.

Seeing them get up, Pastor Michel singled them out for praise. "Before they all slip out," he urged, "let's give these ladies a big hand in the rear."

GORDON MOORE

MOM WAS GETTING swamped with calls from strangers. The reason? A medical billing service had a phone number number that was similar to hers. When she called to complain, they told her to get a new number. "I've had mine for 20 years," she pleaded. "Couldn't you change yours?"

They refused. So Mom said, "Fine. From now on I'm going to tell everyone who calls that their bill is paid in full."

The company got a new number the next day.

KIM GRACE

FOR YEARS I had been telling my friend Pete that he ate too much fast food, but he always denied it. One day he admitted I was right.

"What changed your mind?"

"My grandson. When my daughter told him I was coming to visit, he asked, 'Grandpa from Florida, or Grandpa from Pizza Hut?'"

STEVE FRANK

MY LIVELY HEAD of hair has always been a source of amusement for friends and family.

I had always felt that their laughter was unwarranted until I went into a barbershop in Dublin.

As I entered, the barber turned from a customer and welcomed me before saying, "Please tell me you're only here for a quote." ENDA KELLEHER

OFF FOR a weekend break in the mountains with my just divorced boyfriend, we stopped at a lakeside hotel.

My boyfriend went off to sign in and the receptionist handed our key to me.

As I headed to our room, I heard the receptionist say, "Your wife has just gone to the room, sir."

"Oh no," sighed my boyfriend, "she's not here as well is she?"

MOIRA STRACHAN

DURING his spare time my brother, an attorney, volunteers on his town's fire and rescue squad. When I mentioned this to a friend at a barbecue, he smiled and said, "Let me get this straight. Your brother is a lawyer and a paramedic? So he doesn't have to chase the ambulance – he's already in it?"

DALE BIRCH

RDCHALLENGE BY GUNNAR JOHNSON

What's my line? These stars aren't matched with the phrases they made famous. Put the right words in the actors' mouths, and name the movies the quotes came from. Answers below.

a. You had me at hello.

1

b. Mama always said life is like a box of chocolates.

2

c. I'm the king of the world!

3

d. They call me Mister Tibbs.

4

e. Fasten your seat belts. It's going to be a bumpy night.

5

f. You can't handle the truth.

6

Answers: 1. (e) Bette Davis in *All About Eve*. 2. (a) Renée Zellweger in *Jerry Maguire*. 3. (f) Jack Nicholson in *A Few Good Men*. 4. (b) Tom Hanks in *Forrest Gump*. 5. (c) Leonardo DiCaprio in *Titanic*. 6. (d) Sidney Poitier in *In the Heat of the Night*.

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Driving Innovation and Pursuing Victory

Acer technology steers Ferrari to further success

The world-leading Scuderia Ferrari Formula One (F1) Team won their fifth successive F1 Championship in 2003, making another illustrious mark in the history books.

Accompanying the F1 drivers' mix of skill, courage and experience is the equally powerful technology under the hood. As an official IT supplier to the Scuderia Ferrari racing team since 2003, Acer equips Ferrari with the most advanced information technology tools, helping the team to uphold its impressive winning streak.

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Reader's Digest

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Photographed by Chris Stowers

Ban Chiau City, Taiwan. Hsieh Kun-shan refuses to let his disabilities stop him from living a full life – and helping others.

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